

SYNERGY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 2: NO.4

EXPLORING THE BOUNDARIES OF CINEMA AND LITERATURE



COMEDY ISSUE

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COMEDY COMEDY COMEDY



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Jeremy & Renata Kong.





**Welcome to Synergy
Volume 2 No 4
Comedy ! Comedy ! Comedy !**

In 2009 Synergy has transitioned to a bi-monthly publication schedule rather than quarterly and we are thrilled to say this will be a permanent change. Six big issues every year packed with interesting features, reviews and news.

Each issue will have a theme and the primary genres will be horror, cult and retro with special Halloween and Xmas issues. The other issues will be selected from a range of possible subjects including World Cinema, Comedy, Crime and even TV on DVD.

This is an unusual issue for Synergy one on Comedy.

It covers all sorts of comedy including features on British Comedy, the Carry On Series, John Waters, Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy and others.

There are also a wide range of comedy oriented reviews including new releases, retro, and comedy horror.

Of course we continue to include a wide range of reviews of current DVD releases, books, documentaries, magazines, music, Urban Vinyl and Collectibles and lots more.

It should be noted that comedy comes in lots of shapes and sizes and much of it is "adult" and will include explicit descriptions and language.

You are reminded Synergy is a magazine for adults (I would not necessarily say *mature* adults !) and not a mass market cinema magazine.

As usual, we welcome your feedback.

Enjoy !
**Robert Black &
The Synergy Team**



INFORMATION



Synergy Reviews DVDs from all regions.
The **R** description with each title advises the Region.

1 = USA
2 = UK
3 = Asia
4 = Australia
0 = All region.

NTSC or PAL is used with the ALL REGION CODE and refers to the TV format.

Blu Ray: We only review All Region and Region B titles.

The best reference site for Blu Ray is [blu-ray.com](http://www.blu-ray.com). It includes lots of details about Blu Ray releases and is one of the only reliable sources for information on which Blu Ray releases are ALL REGION.

Web: <http://www.blu-ray.com>

While we review the DVD that has been supplied to us (from whatever region), there may be other editions of the film. Since we are a genre based magazine, the range of titles reviewed will always come from all around the globe.

For international films from the US there are many suppliers including Amazon www.amazon.com and Deep Discount www.deepdiscount.com

For international films from the UK there are many suppliers including www.amazon.co.uk.

For rare Asian titles we recommend Asian Cult DVD (<http://asiancult.com>)

For other rare titles we recommend Diabolik DVD (<http://www.diabolikdvd.com>).

For Australia DVDs a good cross retail search engine is DVD Plaza (<http://www.dvdplaza.com.au>)

We have no business relationship with any retailer and only recommend them for your information. Please make an informed decision before purchasing from any store and compare prices.

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The print edition Synergy Magazine is published 6 times a year and includes all the reviews from the website from the preceding months with extra materials, articles and features extended reviews, added images, screen shorts and special competitions.

As of January 2009 features, articles and competitions **ONLY** appear in the digital and print editions.

Digital Edition Special Conditions

The Digital Edition can be downloaded free. It can be printed for personal use only (not for *commercial use*). Distribution by individuals for non commercial use is permitted, indeed encouraged. However, Synergy cannot be reproduced or distributed *commercially* with express written permission.

The Digital Edition cannot be altered or articles used without permission, except for small segments for criticism or review as copyright allows.

The copyright for the majority of images used (screenshots, artwork, cover images etc) are the property of the individual publishers. They should not be reproduced without permission,

The movie posters used are within the public domain.



In fact Bag Mags Volume 2 is probably even more shocking, kitsch, sexy and outrageous.

Packed with even more rare and incredible images than volume one, *Bad Mags Volume 2* is guaranteed to shock, astound and certainly to overexcite readers.

Author Tom Brinkmann has spoken with many of the individuals responsible for these magazines, some of whom are referenced here for the first time.

Bag Mags Volume 2 also provides comprehensive background details on the creators and often maverick publishers, along with plenty of anecdotal information, mind bending extracts and hundreds of rare photos and cover reproductions.

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Devilish Mags: Monsters & Occult Sex
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The Short Story & Magazine Articles of Ed Wood

Bibliography and Selected Reading

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Thanks to Headpress we have four copies of Bag Mags Volume 2 to giveaway.

Send an email with Bag Mags Volume 2 in the subject with your name and address in the body of the message to:

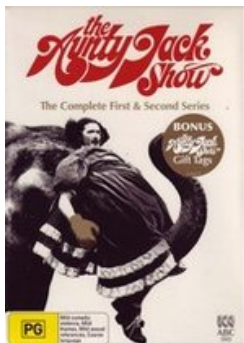
promotions@synergy-magazine.com

Emails will be chosen at random on 15th August 2009 and prizes sent via post to the winners in the following week. (Entries welcome worldwide)

Want to know more about Bad Mags ?

See the review of *Bad Mags Volume Two* in our book section or visit Tom Brinkmann's incredible website at:

Web: <http://badmaqs.com/>



Aunty Jack

In conjunction with our Comedy Issue Roadshow Entertainment has made available sets of Aunty Jack Season 1 and 2 and Aunty Jack Wollongong the Brave.

Send an email with AUNTY JACK in the subject with your name and address in the body of the message to:

promotions@synergy-magazine.com

Emails will be chosen at random on 15th August 2009 and prizes sent via post to the winners in the following week. (Australian entries only please).

Hell's Half Acre

Hell's Half Acre is an outrageous black horror comedy. It is packed with gore, splatter and a very dark sense of humour.



We have copies to giveaway. (R1 US format DVD)

Send an email with HHA in the subject with your name and address in the body of the message to:

promotions@synergy-magazine.com

Emails will be chosen at random on 15th August 2009 and prizes sent via post to the winners in the following week. (Worldwide Entries).



Body Donors

We have reviewed all sorts of fun Vinyl and plus collectibles in our last few issues. One of the more startling Urban Vinyl series of toys have been the Organ Donors. (See our review this issue).

They are cute, odd and superbly collectible. Each one is different and comes in a "Blind box" i.e. you don't know which one you are getting.

We have a selection of Body Donor Blind Boxes to giveaway thanks to Foox.

Send an email with Body Donor in the subject with your name and address in the body of the message to:

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Emails will be chosen at random on 15th August 2009 and each winner will receive one Blind Box Body Donor. Prizes sent via post to the winners in the following week. (Australian entries only please).



NEWS IN BRIEF



Iron Sky cast revealed!

Web: <http://www.ironsky.net>

The Iron Sky team currently at the Cannes film festival announced the latest additions to the films cast today. Not only is the cast great, but amazingly it includes someone who's taller than Timo! German actor Götz Otto will step in the boots of the intelligence officer Klaus Adler, a fanatic Moon Nazi devoted on invading the Earth. Otto has previously appeared in numerous feature films and TV-series, including attempting to kill James Bond as Mr. Stamper in the film Tomorrow Never Dies.

"When I first heard about Iron Sky, I instantly realized that it's a really wicked idea, something only a Finn could come up with. Being German I thought it would be time for a comedy and spoof about this topic." Otto comments.

According to Timo: *"My main interest was to find an actor who's shorter than me, and for this there's no one better than almost two meter tall Otto. Götz is a humouristic actor and a real gentleman with the right kind of rough charm and a voice that blow the windshield off the microphone."*

The other two new cast members attached to Iron Sky are also from Germany. Veteran actor Tilo Prückner (The Never-ending Story) will design the wunderwaffe of the Fourth Reich as the Nazi scientist Doktor Richter.

The legendary Udo Kier (Dogville, Blade, Shadow of the Vampire) will appear as the Nazi

Moon base commander Wolfgang Höss. Earlier German actress Julia Dietze (1½ Ritter) joined the cast as Moon Nazi officer Renate Richter.

Dark Horse Entertainment and Universal Pictures have a Secret !

Dark Horse Entertainment has announced the next picture to come out of its production pact with Universal Pictures: The Secret, an adaptation of 2007's critically acclaimed graphic novel and comic series.

Scott Milam, who wrote the forthcoming remake of the horror classic Mother's Day, has been signed to write this adaptation. Milam's other projects currently in development include Bedlam for RKO/Twisted Pictures, Ab Tak Chhapan for Paramount Vantage with Jinks/Cohen producing, and Karnival at Rogue with Michael Zoumas producing.

The Secret tells of a group of high-school seniors who play a silly prank, only to see it backfire when one of their friends vanishes without a trace.

Mike Richardson, president and founder of Dark Horse, and writer of the comic on which the film is based, will produce for Dark Horse Entertainment alongside Scott Stuber, who will produce for Stuber Productions. Pam Abdy and Jared Pfeifer will oversee the project for Stuber Productions with Keith Goldberg and Chris Tongue overseeing for Dark Horse Entertainment.

Universal's Senior Vice President of Production, Scott Bernstein, and Creative Executive Dave Targan will oversee the project for the studio.

"Scott is a terrific writer and we're excited to be working with him on this project," said Richardson. *"The story is full of scares and surprises and goes places no one will expect."*





The Twilight Saga: New Moon

The Twilight Saga: New Moon is set to hit Australian Cinemas 19 November 2009

In *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*, Bella Swan (Kristen Stewart) is devastated by the abrupt departure of her vampire love, Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson) but her spirit is rekindled by her growing friendship with the irresistible Jacob Black (Taylor Lautner).

Suddenly she finds herself drawn into the world of the werewolves, ancestral enemies of the vampires, and finds her loyalties tested.

Based on the best-selling book series, *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* is the highly anticipated next instalment to the movie *Twilight*, which has grossed US\$380MM globally at the box office, and has become a worldwide sensation and cultural phenomenon.

RunPee

RunPee is a very different movie review site.

It won't tell you about how bad or good a movie is. It won't tell you about the plot, scripting or action. It won't even comment about the look of

the film or whether it is worth seeing.

RunPee will simply tell you what are the best parts to leave the movie for a few minutes, so you can run to the toilet. It seems all movies have a little "down time" and RunPee documents when it is best to run off for a leak. You can even visit the site later for a brief description of what you missed.

In *X Men: Wolverine* the RunPee occurs about 50 minutes into the film when Wolverine discovers new claws in the bathroom.

When you return home you can click on the *X men: Wolverine* link and get info on what you missed. It is scrambled so that you cannot accuse them of giving away the plot.

In this case the scrambled information tells you:

"Wolverine accidentally chops up some of the bathroom fixtures with his new claws/blades. He then goes downstairs for dinner with the old couple. The old man and Logan talk about motorcycles and that's about it. Next morning Logan is out in the barn when the old man comes out and gives him his son's old jacket."

The old lady comes out with some food and that's when a sniper shoots her and then the old man. Logan is already sitting on the motorcycle so he speeds out of the barn just as the bad guys blow it up. Chase scene ensues".

The PeeTimes are user generated and as new entries are added, slowly the PeeTimes are refined and a final entry is created.

Films are index by release date, alphabetical, running time, classic movies and archived movies.

The site is in Beta and still obviously in development but will prove very useful to anyone who has had to make a mad dash to the toilet during a movie.



The NZFC has the statutory responsibility "to encourage, participate and assist in the making, promotion, distribution and exhibition of films" made in New Zealand by New Zealanders on New Zealand subjects.

The NZFC provides loans and equity financing to New Zealand film-makers to assist in the development and production of feature films and short films being made in New Zealand. The NZFC does not itself produce films. The NZFC is also active in the sales and marketing of New Zealand films, and it assists with training and professional development within the industry.

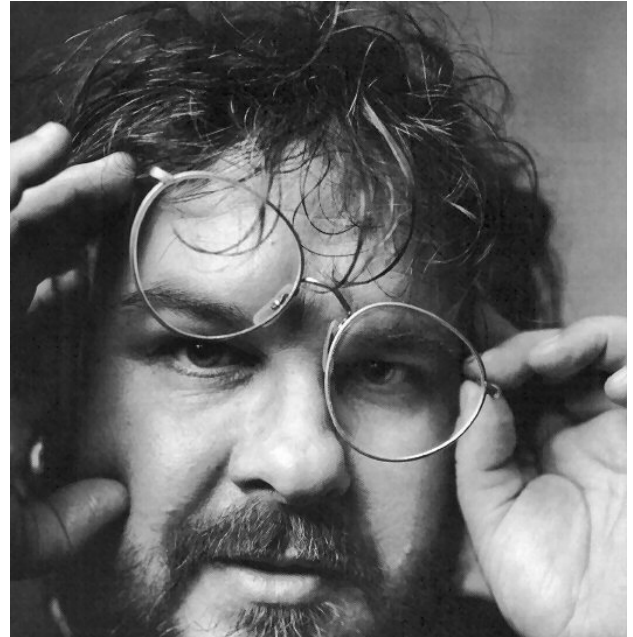
Oscar award winning director and producer Peter Jackson will lead a ministerial review of the New Zealand Film Commission to ensure it is best able to serve the needs of the local industry and community, Minister for Arts Culture and Heritage Christopher Finlayson announced today.

"National promised a review of the New Zealand Film Commission during last year's election campaign," Mr Finlayson said. "The act was passed over 30 years ago, and during that time the face of the local film industry has changed dramatically."

"The film industry has been one of New Zealand's highest profile successes of the last 15 years. This review will ensure it is receiving the support needed to continue that growth."

"The Commission plays a part in every stage of the industry from funding start-up productions to helping market and distribute the end product. It's vital to establish how the Commission has been performing in each of these mandated areas, and whether it has been providing the best value to industry."

"Peter Jackson is the most successful director and producer in New Zealand film, and is uniquely qualified to lead this review. Film in New Zealand is a creative sector, but also an industry. He has achieved success both critically and commercially, and has done so at all levels of production represented in the local industry from DIY low-budget movies to record-setting international blockbusters."



David Court, Head of Screen Business at the Australian Film, Television & Radio School, will work with Peter Jackson to examine the Commission's legislation and the constitution, function, powers and financial provisions it provides.

"The NZ Film Commission is a vital and indispensable component of our film industry," Jackson said. "I'm looking forward to making positive and constructive suggestions to ensure that it remains effective in what is a rapidly changing international movie climate. David and I intend to consult with many local filmmakers, so the review reflects the thoughts and opinions of the writers, producers and directors the Film Commission was created to support."

The review will look at the challenges facing the Commission in a rapidly changing domestic and international film industry context. Key issues are how the Commission can most effectively help industry meet New Zealand cultural content objectives and reach a domestic and international audience.

It will consider whether the New Zealand Film Commission Act 1978 needs to be updated to ensure that the Commission is responsive to the challenges that the organisation and the industry faces in the current environment.

Reference: <http://www.nzfilm.co.nz>

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British Comedy A Retrospective

Both the British and Australians share a common view of humour, so many British comedies have done well in Australia. There is a general willingness to poke fun at authority figures instead of showing "proper" respect. Comedy is used to ridicule pretentious social and hierarchical attitudes, which are nicely lampooned in the British TV sitcom *Keeping Up Appearances* (1990 – 1995). The lead female character Hyacinth Bucket (that's pronounced Boo-Kay) lives in the belief that she is in a higher social group than she actually is. The opposite end of the spectrum is the ridicule of social intolerance, which is illustrated with the classic Australian sitcom *Kingswood Country* (1980 – 1984) where the lead male character Ted Bullpit calls his son-in-law "The Bloody Wog". The British equivalent is *Til Death Us Do Part* (1965 – 1975) where Alf Garnett, the lead character, manages to be anti-Semitic, anti-foreigner, homophobic, and just about everything else. With both these examples the ability of the script writers to use ridicule as a form of humour is outstanding.

The British and Australian people also have a highly developed love of the pun. This style of humour is not easily translated into other languages or cultures. To illustrate such examples we only need to look at the failed remakes of British TV sitcoms by the Americans. This may have to do with the more homogeneous nature of Britain's and Australian population, most of whom speak a form of English. Except, of course, the Welsh. The United States by con-



trast has such a diverse mix of origins that it is hard to find a common local form of verbal humour that can be understood by all. Possibly for this reason slapstick has been the traditional form of American humour until recently. Slapstick humour could be described as a base level visual humour that can be understood and enjoyed by most audiences without much thought. As an example, have a look at the work of Mel Brooks.

The British class system after WW2 was still alive and well. The younger people were feeling rather claustrophobic, caught between the class system and the constant menace of annihilation during the Cold War. A manic form of comedy was their way of making light of the day to day tension.

The British form of comedy began in the music halls in the mid-1800s. Rather than the burlesque style of music hall so popular in the States and Europe, the British featured stand-up comedians, humorous and bawdy songs that the audience was invited to join in with, and acts that often verged on the ridiculous and dangerous. The early slapstick silent movies did rather well in Britain, being often a continuation of the music hall style. The gramophone, however, brought much of the entertainment into the home and the music halls began to falter. Wireless cut further into the market, and the last music halls closed in the 1960s.

Some of their styles of humour lived on in post-WW2 radio shows such as *The Goon Show* (1951 – 1960) (Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe, and Spike Milligan - sometimes also known as Spike Milligna, the well-known typing error).

**Bob Estreich, Marc Mellors &
David Kennedy**



Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe, and Spike Milligan—*The Goon Show*

This had all the classic comedy elements – slapstick, catchcries, repetition, illogic, caricature characters, puns, bad jokes – it was predictable and familiar to listeners in a country which had only just got over a major war and now seemed to be entering new ones. There was something comforting in knowing that each week Gritpype-Thynne (suave arch-villain) and Count Moriarty (bungling French henchman) would carry out some dastardly deed against the very British person of Neddy Seagoon (patriotic buffoon). The plot would usually be accidentally foiled by Major Bloodnok (Colonel Blimp-type army chap-pie who suffers terribly from flatulence), Bluebot-tle (sex-crazed schoolboy who would inevitably be blown up during the show), Henry Crun (senile elder citizen), Minnie Bannister (geriatric lady of colourful past) or The Famous Eccles (traditional village idiot). It had easily memorable catchcries like “You silly, twisted boy”, “We’ll all be murdered in our beds!”, and “you rotten swine, you have deaded me”. The everlasting popularity and cult status of the Goon Shows can be measured by the fact that a Google search will bring up over 200,000 hits, thirty years after the show finished.

Another popular radio show was the scandalous *Around the Horne* (1965 – 1968). This show had the brief skit structure from the roots of Music Hall that was to later prove so successful for Monty Python. It also starred the haughty but naughty Kenneth Williams who went on to star in the Carry On films. One of the regular skits featured a gay couple, which was very daring for that period. For the first time, an entertainment show on the BBC was game to take potshots at the Establishment.



Telegoons

The BBC also appeared to not mind the sexual innuendo that featured in the program. Clearly this was the humour that the British loved.

Radio shows did not always translate well to the new medium, TV. Possibly the British public, being on the whole fairly well educated, enjoyed using their imagination to fill in the scenes depicted on radio by dialogue and sound effects. The added visual stimulus of TV seemed to be a bit of a stumbling block for a while. I saw episodes of the translated-to-TV *Telegoons* and they were, frankly, bloody dreadful.

An early producer, David Frost, tried to remedy this by experimenting with TV comedy. For this he needed funny people who could also act. He drew on graduates of the British universities’ various repertory groups. Their work followed the familiar format of short skits, with an often surreal or manic touch, and so translated well to TV as a continuation of the Music Hall style. An early show, *That Was The Week That Was* (1962 – 1963), and its follow-up *The Frost Report* (1966) proved popular with audiences and was sophisticated enough to slip past the conservative BBC programmers. It managed 28 episodes. TWTWTW starred John Cleese, Ronnie Corbett and Ronnie Barker in their first TV roles. Rediffusion, the forerunner of Thames TV, ran the first series of their show *At Last The 1948 Show* in late



1966. Some new names appeared on the credits – John Cleese had moved over to Rediffusion, to join Graham Chapman, Tim Brooke-Taylor and Marty Feldman. A similar show, *Do Not Adjust Your Set* (1967 – 1969), also ran on Rediffusion as a kid's show at about the same time. It was written and performed by Eric Idle, Michael Palin, and Terry Jones. Another young British actor, David Jason, also appeared. Producer Humphrey Barclay pitched it at a level that quickly picked up an adult audience as well.



Although many of the actors met at University, some were only there through Scholarship funding. From their lower class backgrounds they were able to see and lampoon the inherently ridiculous nature of their higher class fellow students.



Do Not Adjust Your Set was replaced in October 1969 by the legendary cult series *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. This was written by Cleese, Chapman and Terry Gilliam and acted by Cleese, Eric Idle, Michael Palin, Terry Jones, Gilliam and Chapman, supported by a host of other actors and actresses over the years. The series finally finished in 1974 after being screened worldwide.

As well as including all the traditional hallmarks of British comedy, it also introduced the first "immortal" sketches – the Dead Parrot sketch and the Lumberjack Song are two that are known worldwide. If you Google "dead parrot sketch" you will get over 400,000 hits at the time of writing.

It was paralleled in the US by shows like *Laugh In* (1968 – 1983), but these seemed somehow more forced and slickly presented and less spontaneous than their British equivalents. They also lacked the irreverence of their British counterpart, being carefully planned to offend as few people as possible. Monty Python was happy to parody the British class system, religion, government, and Victorian morality. Even the National Anthem has been given the parody treatment. A short clip from *At Last The 1948 Show* featured a full orchestra, background film of the Queen, the British flag, the Royal Navy passing in review, a backing choir, and John Cleese singing (in best stiff upper lip style) "I've Got A Ferret Sticking Up My Nose". This sort of content was taboo with the U.S. shows.

Another popular and rather surreal show was *The Goodies* (1970 – 1982), with Tim Brooke-Taylor, Bill Oddie and Graeme Garden. It ran on BBC between 1970 and 1980, then for a further two years on London Weekend TV. Not quite as far out as Monty Python, it ran in the early evenings and exposed a new, younger audience to their irreverent humour. A Boy Scout "World Domination" badge?



With the end of the Monty Python series, the actors/writers went on to produce a number of films that included most of the Python crew. They are generally regarded as "the Monty Python movies". Without the BBC and Thames exercising some sort of control over good taste, everything became a target e.g.: religion in *Life Of Brian* (1979), probably one of their best films ever, British history in the cult *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975). The British class system in Michael Palin's *Ripping Yarns* (1976 – 1979), and life, religion, foreigners, and even Death in *The Meaning of Life* (1983).

This latter film spawned its own classic moment with Mr Creosote overeating until he explodes.



The films include the comparatively little-known *Time Bandits* (1981), where mythology, God and British folklore get the treatment. The music hall influence still shows through, as many of these films were written as short sketches around a central subject and were later joined into a coherent story.

Television's appetite for content saw a rise in small but rather likeable sitcoms that balanced the social scale – *Steptoe & Son* (1962 – 1965)(copied poorly in the US as *Sanford & Son*) gently and sadly lampooned the social climbing pretensions of the lower classes, and Alf Garnett in *Til Death Do Us Part* (1965 – 1975) did the same for lower-class bigotry. The classic *Yes Minister* (1980 – 1984) viciously deflated politicians and the Public Service. Incidentally, Antony Jay, one of the show's writers, was later knighted for services to British entertainment. Perhaps Her Majesty has a twisted sense of humour as well? *The Good Life* (1975 – 1978) took a likeable swipe at the dropout semi-hippy mentality.



Steptoe

There was an increasingly relaxed attitude to sex. *Percy* (1971) was a comedy about a penis transplant operation. Just the thought of the subject was enough to bring out the anti-pornography brigade even though there was nothing even mildly titillating about it (apart from the strip scene).



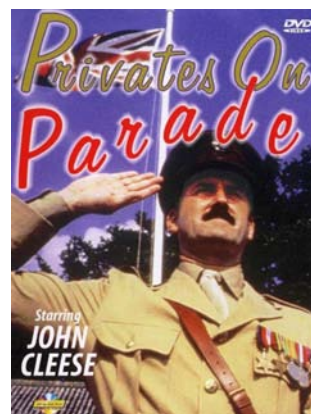
The *Carry On* series of films took smuttiness to new heights (depths?), but done in the traditional British manner it was funny, not dirty. *The Kenny Everett Video Show* (1978 -) and *The Benny Hill Show* (1955 – 1968) gave TV a good dose of raunchiness – but it was always done as humour. In the U.S. they were still uncomfortable about sex – they would rather have psy-

chologists discussing it on a panel show than make jokes about it.

Homosexuality, also taboo in the U.S. seemed quite acceptable now in British comedy. *The Dick Emery Show* (1963 – 1981) featured characters ranging from moderately campy to drag queens. *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* (1974 – 1981), a show about a theatre troupe in Malaya, was not quite so openly gay, but its long run showed that the British were quite comfortable with homosexuality in the comedy context. It led to the film *Privates on Parade* (1982) which quite openly adopted the assumption that some of the male performers were gay. In addition explored serious gay themes including homosexuals in the military, gay relationships and prejudice. It was an unusual role for John Cleese yet he performed admirably in this underrated film. A number of British actors at the time were openly gay, so it was probably just a matter of familiarity.



Kenney Everett



Throughout British comedy is the continued use of female impersonation as a means to explore complex comedic ideas. There has been much conjecture as to how this has developed including the influence of the same-sex British upper class school system and Pantomime.

In many ways the use of a female persona allowed a male comedian to use anonymity as a way to say things he could not usually get away with.



Danny La Rue

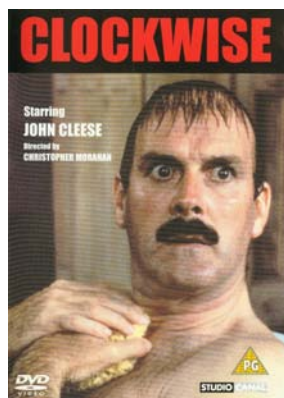
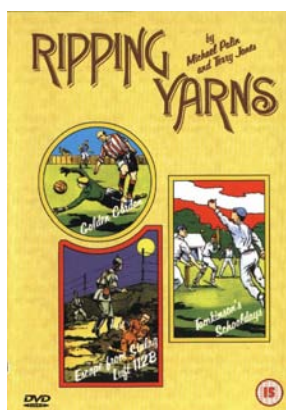
From Danny La Rue to Dame Edna Everage (while she/he is Australian, there is a strong English influence) the influence of drag is found throughout English comedy. Drag is also used in darker comedies such as *The League of Gentlemen* and *Little Britain* as a powerful tool for social commentary and ridicule.

It is a measure of the popularity of British comedy that almost all of these shows are still available on DVD today, often in good-value compilation packs.

With the final separation of the Monty Python team, the individuals were free to develop their own styles.

Michael Palin's *Ripping Yarns* is a wonderful lampoon of Victorian attitudes and the class system. The Tompkinson's Schooldays episode is a brutal commentary on British Public schools where Tompkinson, by winning a hopping race while under the influence of drugs, is elevated to the prized position of School Bully. The Curse of The Claw is a Boy's Own romp in which the entire crew of a ship except the hero discover that they are all women ("Oh, these things on my chest? I've had them since my teens. The doctor said I'll grow out of them"). Murder at Moorstones Manor takes "the Butler Did It" to new levels – they ALL did it.

John Cleese started a company to make training movies, which are often comedy gems in their own right, but still found time for film work in wonderful but lower key comedies like *A Fish Called Wanda* (1988), *Fierce Creatures* (1997) and his rather unappreciated *Clockwise* (1986). To counterbalance these, he also brought out the classic *Fawlty Towers* (1975 – 1979) series, still showing somewhere around the world today. The demented, downtrodden Basil Fawlty has become a cult figure for his desperate and pa-

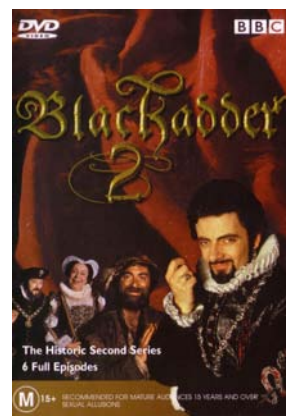


Fawlty Towers

thetically unsuccessful social-climbing. Cleese's imitation of a goose-stepping Hitler must be seen to be believed. The series rated No. 1 in a Year 2000 list of the BBC's best programs.

TV sitcoms like *On The Buses* (1969 – 1973), *Some Mothers Do Ave Em* (1973 – 1978), *Keeping Up Appearances*, *The Good Life* (1975 – 1978) and Rowan Atkinson's slightly tragic *Blackadder* (1983 – 1989) series (traces the declining fortunes of a son of British royalty down through the generations) set the style – low key, a sense of the ridiculous, and totally disrespectful. *Blackadder* also showcased the talents of a new wave of British comedians – Hugh Laurie, Stephen Fry, and Tony Robinson. Although the first two have continued in comedy, Tony Robinson has followed somewhat in the footsteps of Michael Palin, and moved into documentaries.

His Worst Jobs In History (2004) series is unforgettable, if only for the sight of this sad,



Tony Robinson

weather-beaten little man exposing himself to some of the filthiest, most disgusting occupations of British history. He manages to maintain a thread of humour through each episode, however.

One of the best comedies in recent years manages to trash French, Germans, and Italians as well as British and the British language. It was set in WW2 France and clobbers the sacred cows with glee. *'Allo 'Allo* (1982 – 1992) was a worthy successor to Monty Python, and many of the jokes were much in the same style. It ran for eight seasons and spawned catchphrases like “*You stupid woman*” and “*Good moaning*” (an English actor, Arthur Boostrom, acting as a British spy acting as a French policemen, who speaks distorted English to simulate an Englishman speaking bad French. OK, you really had to see it to follow it).



Another one you have to see to believe is *Little Britain* (2004 -). This is the campest show I have so far seen on TV. It is in-your-face offensive, it has strong sexual and homosexual themes and strong language. It would never work in the U.S. even though they tried putting their own version into production last year. It is supposedly a guide to the British people, but it parodies British stereotypes, especially gay people, women, and the obese.



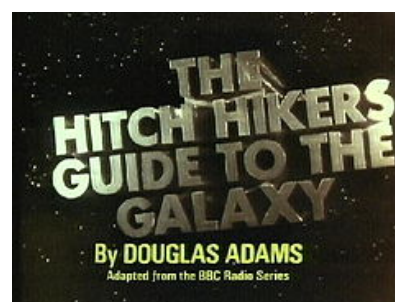
Some British found this offensive, and saw it as an attack on weaker members of society. Apparently even the British have their limits. *Little Britain* followed in the long tradition of English “dark parody” humour and had much in common with *The League of Gentlemen* and even the *Catherine Tate Show*.

Comedy has crept into many other British fields,



even science fiction. *Doctor Who* (1963 – 1989, then revived in 2005) started out seriously enough, but successive actors played the part more lightly as they got into character. The TV series *Red Dwarf* (1988 – 1999) carried on the best traditions of British comedy – an anti-hero with no respect for his betters, ridiculous unconventional SF plotlines, and a total disregard for “good” sci-fi. This one also did not translate well to the U.S. Its antisocial humour was so tamed down in the U.S. pilot that it simply didn’t work any more.

Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy spawned films, TV shows (the BBC 1981 TV version is probably the best), follow-up



books and a plot that seemed to change with every reincarnation. Its subtle but satirical comedy has aged well, as has its science fiction plotline(s). Simon Jones as Arthur Dent spends the entire show in a slightly befuddled way as the Galaxy turns to Chaos around him. He probably represents every Briton’s reaction to change in this respect.

Guy Ritchie’s films like *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998) or *Snatch* (2000) are underworld films with a strong dramatic plotline, with some incredible characterizations but also with strong comedy subplots. There is also the strange zombie comedy *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) in which Shaun is too concerned about the collapse of his personal life to notice the zombies and carnage all around him.

The British have not forgotten conventional comedy, however. *The Office* (2001) was a Ricky Gervais satire based on that new upper class, the office manager. It is every bit as savage as the earlier shows, just a little more subtle in its presentation. In a similar vein, *The IT Crowd* (2006 - 2008) gives a serve to computer technicians servicing a large office.

British comedy is alive and well, thankfully.

Snuffbox
Special Edition
2006, DVD Release 2009
Written by Matt Berry and Rich Fulcher, extra
material by Nicky Gargano
Producer Charlie Hanson, Director Michael
Cumming
Region 4 PAL (Australian Edition)
Beyond Home Entertainment

Reviewer: Bob Estreich

Snuffbox is an excellent example of the new wave of comedy coming from Britain's younger comedians. It draws heavily on the style of earlier British comedies, particularly *The Young Ones*, but goes further in its crassness, strange plotlines and surreal undertones. In this, it is radically different from current mainstream productions, and may signal a return to the irrational madness of the Monty Python days. This sort of humour is creeping back into TV, which is better for it.

The "heroes" are Matt Berry and Rich Fulcher, acting under their own names. You may have seen them together in another recent BBC comedy, *The Mighty Boosh*. Berry also appeared in *Garth Marengi's Dark Place*, a recent hospital dark comedy, and *The IT Crowd*. Although each episode in the series is presented as a series of sketches, there are constant themes running through them. Berry is Britain's official Executioner with a very relaxed attitude to his work (the first episode starts with a hanging – hardly auspicious).

He is also somewhat impoverished and has to live off inheritance money conned off his American friend Rich Fulcher. He is completely with-

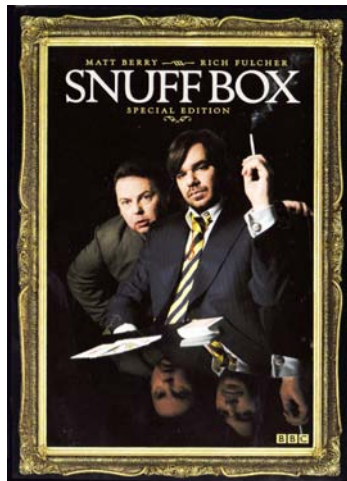
out scruples, arrogant and crude, but is a success with women – until he finds out that they have a boyfriend, then he turns vicious. He is not above pinching his friend's (rare) girlfriends. Fulcher is naïve, bumbling, and a bit loud. Due to a neat bit of time travel in the gentleman's club in which they spend most of their time, he is also a friend of Berry's great great uncle from 1888. Great Great Uncle Berry can often help him out of whatever problem he currently has.

And problems are something he has in plenty. He has stolen Berry's diaries and reads out Berry's indiscretions to the members of the club. Berry decides he must kill Fulcher. In a later episode, Fulcher keeps stealing Berry's punchlines of every joke he tries to tell. He is getting the popularity and attention that Berry thinks should be his. Fulcher must die. And so on.

There are many weird subplots running through the episodes and being refreshed regularly. Who is the man who smears cake all over his face? Why is it so hard to buy a set of silver cowboy boots without being brutally bashed by the shop assistants? Why is the men's toilet in the club constantly out of order? What is the significance of eating rabbits? We may never know, but it's going to be fun finding out. Some of the minor characters in the sketches are not particularly funny, but overall Berry and Fulcher have created a wonderful piece of black comedy.

Their demented humour is not for everyone, but if you liked Python or the shows mentioned above, you owe it to yourself to take a look at this one. Despite its short season, it has achieved cult status.

The Australian edition is a 3-DVD set with the set of six episodes. The third disk is a music CD with 23 tracks from the show. Special features include commentaries by artists and directors, Inside the Snuff Box, Outtakes and stills.



Carry On about Carry On!



Carry On was an extremely long running series of relatively low budget British comedy films directed by Gerald Thomas and produced by Peter Rogers, with most of the plots and dialogue written by Talbot Rothwell. The films developed out of the British tradition of music hall with an extensive use of parody, double entendre and innuendo. It is certainly amazing to look back at some of the earlier films and see how risqué some of the double entendre actually was. The series made a constant use of the "English sensibility" when it came to sex and hence was able to include what could be best described as a barrage of sex jokes in every film, yet in a witty and at times even subtle manner.

There was also the uniquely camp humour of the series which was certainly helped by the outrageous mannerisms of Charles Hawtrey and Kenneth Williams. Even in the earliest films (1958-1964) when homosexuality was a taboo subject in US cinema, the Carry On films were packed with gay in-jokes which made them all the more amusing to those "in the know". I am sure many of the jokes went right over the heads of middle class heterosexual audiences of the period. The Carry On films were a unusual mix of different classes of humour, bringing together dry wit and acerbic humour with "tits and bum" popular comedy. It is this incongruous combination which made the series so successful.

The Carry On films also made an extensive use of slapstick and physical humour, and much of the humour actually hinges on the bad sets, ridiculous background, cheap production and obvious historical contradictions.

The series began with *Carry*



Hattie Jacques and Joan Hickson in *Carry On Nurse*

On Sergeant (1958), about a group of recruits on National Service with Sergeant Grimshawe played by William Hartnell, the first Doctor Who. It was so successful that the series began. It was followed by two Carry On films the next year, *Carry On Teacher* and *Carry On Nurse*.

Carry On Teacher focuses on two school inspectors who come to a school to assess the performance of the staff. It is a constant battle between the unruly children and the teachers. Miss Short favours physical discipline while others such as Mr. Milton favour a less strict approach. When the pupils realise their headmaster is going to leave, they plan various ruses to get him to stay. A romantic subplot helps fill out the plot.

Carry on Nurse takes aim at the health system in the UK and centres on the patients in a public hospital who are disgusted with the treatment they have received from the nurses, doctors and staff. After getting very drunk they decide to perform their own surgery to remove a union.



Kenneth Williams as Caesar in *Carry on Cleo*

A hugely successful Carry On Film was the 1964 *Carry On Cleo* which was a spoof of the Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor classic *Cleopatra*, made in 1963.

The Romans invade a very wet and miserable Britain which seems for some reason to still be in the Stone Age. The British still have not invented the wheel and dinosaurs still roam the land. Hengist Pod is a square wheel builder and Horsa is his neighbour. Soon their lives change as the Romans arrive and they are captured and transported to Rome as slaves. They are put up for sale and Horsa is auctioned off to a rather overweight Roman woman of some local standing. Since Hengist remains unsold he is to be used as lion fodder in the Arena.

Together they escape and when hiding inside the Vestal Virgin enclosure foil an attempt on the emperor's life. Caesar, played at his camp best by Kenneth Williams, hires Hengist, believing him to be the ultimate warrior. Soon, however, Marc Anthony becomes involved with Cleopatra and he must decide between his emperor and his lover. This is Roman history like you have never seen it before...

Twenty-nine films and one compilation film were made between 1958 and 1978 at Pinewood Studios, with an additional film made in 1992. The films relied on a repertoire of comedy actors which only changed a little over the years. The mainstays of the series were Kenneth Williams who appeared in twenty-six films, Joan Sims who appeared in twenty-four, Charles Hawtrey twenty three, Sid James nineteen, Peter Butterworth eighteen, Kenneth Connor seventeen, Hattie



Jacques fourteen and various others. While Frankie Howerd is linked in the public's mind to the Carry On series he actually only appeared in two films and the 1969 Christmas TV Special.

The focus of all the Carry On films was on parody and they sent up everything from mainstream films *Cleopatra* (1963) (*Carry On Cleo*), film Noir (*Carry On Spying*) and horror cinema (*Carry On Screaming*) to British institutions. Health was a recurring theme parodied in *Carry On Nurse*, *Carry On Doctor*, *Carry On Again Doctor* and *Carry On Matron*. Other themes included the British Empire (*Carry On Up the Khyber*), Holidays (*Carry On Camping* and *Carry On Behind*), the Seaside (*Carry On Girls*), the Foreign Legion (*Follow That Camel*) and so on.

The Carry On Films are a uniquely British institution and attempts to break into the US market did not go well. For example in 1967 *Follow That Camel* was created as a spoof on the Foreign Legion. They cast Phil Silvers as the lead in an attempt to tap into the US market, not successful.

Hawtry and Williams in *Follow That Camel*



The 1992 *Carry on Columbus* was also marketed with an international appeal due to its hip alternative comedy cast but this did not work especially well either.

The characters and comedy style of the *Carry On* film series later moved into shows in other media. There was a television series titled *Carry On Laughing*, and several Christmas specials. There were also three stage shows: *Carry On London*, *Carry On Laughing* and *Wot a Carry On in Blackpool*.

The *Carry On* series also spawned a flood of merchandise including figurines, Bobbin heads, mugs, quiz games, books, novels, soundtracks, spoken word products and more.

In the Seventies the *Carry On* films attempted to tap into the growing sexual revolution with a higher quotient of naughty content but they really could not compete with such soft porn products as the "Confession Of" series. The final attempt was to marry the sexuality of Emmanuelle with a *Carry On* film in *Carry on Emmanuelle* (1978) which was a moderate success. However, to be honest, the film is an absolute mess and portrays the *Carry On* team at their lowest ebb. Trying to marry soft porn and the *Carry On* humour just did not work. The essence of the *Carry On* humour was that the sexuality was expressed via double entendre and innuendo. However, in this film it was so obvious that even Kenneth Williams threatened to walk off set with only a substantial pay rise



keeping him on-board. There were also ratings debate about the nudity and sexual content.

The plot centres on Emmanuelle Prevert who just cannot get her husband into bed. A spoof of the sexually explicit *Emmanuelle*, the film revolves around Emmanuelle and her various attempts to make love to her husband. Emile decides to have an open marriage (for some peace and quiet) and gives Emmanuelle permission to sleep with anyone she likes.

She seduces a range of significant characters including the Prime Minister and the American Ambassador. Her celebration of sexual freedom and rampant promiscuity turns her into a major celebrity, especially when a jealous lover gives a list of all her conquests to the national press!

But the question remains will she ever manage to get her own husband into bed?



No *Carry On* Films were made between 1978 and 1992, in 1992 *Carry On Columbus* was made as an attempt to revive the series. It was created to parody the 500th anniversary of Columbus' landing in the Americas.

It was a strange film which was made with British comedians Rik Mayall, Alexei Sayle, Peter Richardson, and Julian Clary. *Carry On* fans saw it as a sell-out and the attempt to marry new alternative comedians with the old style *Carry On* humour really did not work.

Social Issues and Reflections on The Carry On Films

There has been much criticism of the Carry On films by feminist and queer film critics over stereotypes in the Carry On series. Feminists argue that women are portrayed as sex objects or as nagging housewives and that gays are portrayed as limp-wristed queens. There is also much discussion about racial stereotyping.

I have always found that the practise of taking current values and applying them to films from an earlier period quite ludicrous. It is obvious that the Carry On films embodied some of the attitudes of the period and hence we cannot judge them by modern standards. It should also be noted that since the same team was involved in most of the films (excluding *Carry On Columbus*) that this “sensibility” continued right through to the late Seventies.

That being said, when an analysis is done of the Carry On films it is surprising to note how progressive, I cannot bring myself to use the word sophisticated, the humour actually is. While some of this is lost in later films when the same formula has been done to death, it is especially notable in the earlier films.

Take, for example, Barbara Windsor who played a “goodtime girl” in nine Carry On Films. Many

Barbara Windsor



have especially criticised this role as degrading to women, especially her most famous scene in *Carry On Camping*. During this scene she was doing outdoor exercises and her bikini top blew off. However, if you examine these roles with a critical eye, they actually send-up our perception of a “goodtime girl” not the “goodtime girl herself”.

The Carry On humour seems focused on making fun of our perception of stereotypes, rather than making fun of minorities themselves. Many of the stereotypes in the Carry On films are actually empowering; making us laugh at our own preconceptions about woman, racial and sexual minorities etc. They are so deliberately exaggerated that they actually move our attention from the object of mockery to our own attitudes. We can compare this to the films of US comedian Mike Myers. (While Myers as born in the UK and grew up in Canada, his style of humour and work is strongly American). Myers began his career in the “Saturday Night Live” comedy series and got an opportunity at the big screen with *So I Married an Axe Murderer*.

However it was really with the **Austin Powers** films that he achieved rave success and this was followed by *The Love Guru*. The type of humour Myers uses is caricature matched with ridicule. Rather than encouraging us to laugh at our own attitudes, we laugh at the object of



mockery. In his films these figures have ranged from the extremely obese and the disabled to Indians (*The Love Guru*). There have been many complaints about the cruelty and vindictiveness of many of his caricatures. *The Love Guru* was received complaints from Indian and Hindu groups throughout the US.

To compare this with the Carry On films is interesting. The Carry On films (and indeed a lot of British comedy) seems able to lampoon a character while focusing the humour on our attitudes and prejudices about that given stereotype. Mike Myers as representative of a lot of US comedy seems unable to make this differentiation.

It seems that even low-brow English humour (such as the Carry On series) is able to include high-brow wit, double entendre and innuendo as well as comedy for the populace, while Myers and US humour seems, in general, to simply use "easy targets" (i.e. stereotypes) in an attempt to create lowest common denominator comedy for the US masses.

This difference is obviously based on a generalisation and there are exceptions, but English humour always seems to include a certain level of refinement and wit, while too often US humour aims at the maximum possible audience and hence reduces the humour to the lowest possible level.

Obviously there are historical and social differences, however there are also real differences in the way comedy is approached in a cultural sense.

English culture has generally permitted dissent within the theatre and cinema and indeed been comfortable with the role of the eccentric within the community. Indeed, England seems to celebrate the eccentric and revel in unusual characters and strange personalities.

America, on the other hand, has always been uncomfortable with dissent and seems to spend an inordinate amount of time reinforcing middle class patriotic values. Accordingly, American mainstream comedy tends to encode conformity, ridicule the eccentric and ultimately sustain the status quo. While eccentric and radical comedy does exist within the US it tends to be underground or at least less than mainstream.

The Carry On films are classic examples of English humour, mixing both "tits and bum" humour with parody, wit and sarcasm. They vary greatly in quality with later films certainly becoming formulaic. The final 1992 *Carry On Columbus*, while a brave attempt to make an updated Carry On film, failed in so many ways. While it attracted a large audience it was really no longer a Carry On film and was not well received by critics or fans. The Carry On films were a combination of a specific director and producer, a limited team of actors, and a certain sensibility, a bit like the "Hammer" films. They were very much a product of their time and embodied certain characteristics which cannot be repeated.

In 2008 a new film, *Carry On London* or *Carry On Bananas* depending on the press information, was on the books, I am not expecting much. A bit like the new "Hammer" films, it seems unlikely that the uniqueness of the early films could be recreated in the very different world we now live in.

Since the death of producer Peter Rogers it is generally believed no new Carry On films will be produced and I think this is a good thing. The Carry On films were a unique cultural phenomenon and should be enjoyed for what they are and not sullied with constant revivals, adaptations and attempts to remake them for the modern audience. I have recently heard that another Carry On film is coming onto the market, it seems I spoke too soon!

**Carry on Screaming !
Various Editions
Australian R4
Universal**

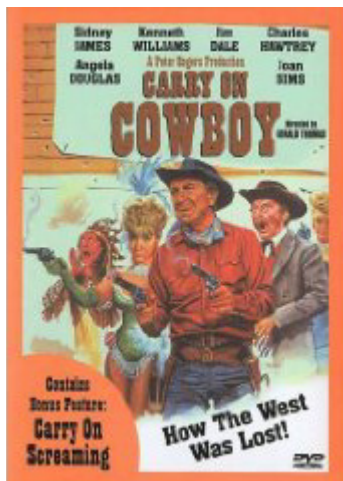
Carry On Screaming! is the twelfth "Carry On" film and was released in 1966.

It featured Kenneth Williams, Joan Sims, Jim Dale, Charles Hawtrey, Bernard Bresslaw and Peter Butterworth. It guest stars included Harry H. Corbett and Fenella Fielding and appearances by Jon Pertwee, Frank Thornton and Angela Douglas.

The appearance of Frank Thornton as a very staid store owner with a camp offside (Charles Hawtrey) predates *Are You Being Served?* by about 8 years yet they have quite a lot of common. Perhaps they saw Thornton in this episode and his role in *Are You Being Served?* developed from here.

Carry on Screaming is really a spoof of the look and feel of the B Grade Hammer horror films of the period with a plot which has elements of Frankenstein and the 1953 *House of Wax*.

The film is set in Edwardian London but clearly made to look like the artificial sets of the Hammer horror films, not difficult on the budgets of the Carry On Films. Albert Potter and Doris Mann are innocently making out when Doris be-



comes convinced someone is watching them. When Albert goes to investigate she is abducted by a Frankenstein like creature who leaves a large hairy finger behind.

Albert goes to the police who, of course, provide a lot of the comedy value. There is Constable Slobotham who is a bungling fool and Sergeant Sidney Bung who is constantly henpecked by his wife.

As Potter leads Slobotham and Bung to where Doris went missing, they find a strange old mansion called Bide-A-Wee Rest Home in the middle of the forest. Here we are introduced to the gothic "Hammer Horror" like characters with a Lurch like butler, an Elvira type character and Kenneth Williams as a camp Dr. Frankenstein.

Of course the tale gets more and more ridiculous as we get stories of re-animated bodies, Frankenstein zombies, girls turned into mannequins for profit and lots more. The humour is very tongue-in-cheek mixing as many innuendoes as possible into every scene with a basic horror spoof. There is also some also good physical humour ranging from re-animation via power points to the dopy Oddbod creatures !

There is even a "Mr. Jekyll and Dr. Hyde" sub plot and a re-animated Mummy, they have really gone all out to spoof all sorts of horror stories within one plot.



Oddbod Junior from *Carry on Screaming*



This certainly isn't the best Carry On film but it does offer a fun horror comedy combination which is amusing to watch.

While out of production, the dual Anchor Bay *Carry On Cowboy* and *Carry on Screaming* DVD (R1) is a good value and can be found easily at second hand sites.

An Australian release is available from Universal.

John Waters

The Cinema of Filth

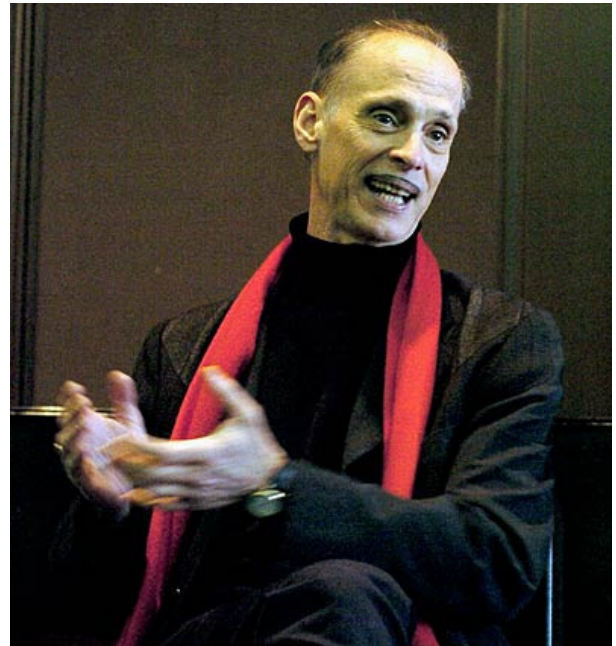
John Waters (born April 22, 1946) is an American filmmaker, actor and writer who continues to shock and entertain the American public with his taboo breaking films. Many believe him to be the foundation of underground and transgressive cinema in America.

His work began with underground films in the 1960s with such titles as *Hag in a Black Leather Jacket*, *Eat your Make Up* and *The Diane Linkletter Story*, all of which are presently unavailable. Even at this early stage Waters had begun to assemble a team of “degenerate” actors which came to be known as “Dreamlanders”. These included Divine (Glenn Milstead), David Lochary, Mary Vivian Pearce and Edith Massey. All of his early films were shot in the Baltimore area and he revelled in using his local community as a background for his debauchery.

Eat Your Makeup had many of the themes that Waters would continue to explore throughout his films. Deliberately tasteless and potentially offensive, it included a re-enactment of the Kennedy assassination featuring drag queen Divine as Jackie Kennedy. It was also a sustained attack on consumerism and middle class values featuring a lead character who kidnaps young



Divine in *Multiple Maniacs*



John Waters

models and forces them to eat their make-up while modelling themselves to death.

The Diane Linkletter Story has never been released. It was a social commentary on the suicide of Art Linkletter's daughter and the way her death was exploited by the media and her family for their own anti-drug crusade. It was made the same day she died and hence a bit too close for comfort.

None of his early films reached a large audience; however, *Mondo Trasho* (1969) and *Multiple Maniacs* (1970) began to get more attention. *Multiple Maniacs* embodied Waters' unique take on the world with every possible perversion packed into an insane 16 minute short.

The travelling sideshow 'Lady Divine's Cavalcade of Perversions' is actually a front for a group of violent and psychotic kidnappers. Of course, Lady Divine herself is the most vicious of all - but her life changes after she gets raped by a fifteen-foot lobster. The reason behind the rape and why it is a fifteen-foot lobster we never quite come to understand.

There are lots of superbly blasphemous content including a re-enactment of the Stations of the Cross with a Communion rite using Wonder bread and canned tuna and Divine receiving what can best be described as a rosary-job where she reaches orgasm right in the church pew!

It was in 1972, however, that John Waters really hit the big time with *Pink Flamingos*, a film which shocked a generation and is still banned in many countries including Australia and Canada. Waters describes the film... "*Pink Flamingos was an anti-hippie*



movie made for hippies who would be punks in two years..." *Pink Flamingos* was certainly a punk film – it was outrageously anti-establishment, pushed bad taste to the limit and rebelled against anything and everything.

It is hard to describe a more bizarre and unusual plot. The filthiest person alive, Divine, is using the codename Babs Johnson while living in a trailer in the woods with her partner Cotton and mother Eddie. Eddie has a fetish for eggs and spends her days waiting for the "egg man" with whom she ultimately falls in love. They also live with her mad drug-addled hippie son Crackers who has a perverse fondness for chickens.

On the other side of town live Connie and Raymond Marble who abduct, torture and rape young women and then sell their babies to gay and lesbian couples for a high price. The profits they make are invested in heroin that is then sold at local elementary schools. They hate Divine and are jealous of her filthy lifestyle. Connie and Raymond Marble have their own personal tastes and like to suck each others toes to achieve sexual satisfaction.

They hire Cookie to have sex with Crackers so they can spy on Divine as they are competing with her for the title of "the filthiest people alive". However things go terribly wrong when Crackers wants to bring chickens



Divine

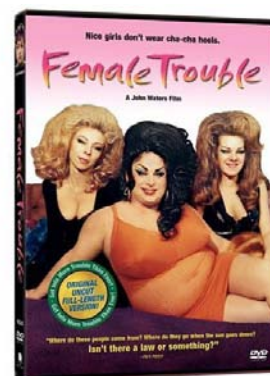


into the equation. *Pink Flamingos* continues to document the battle for the title of "the filthiest people alive" with everything from shoplifting through the bodily secretion of meat and vegetables, singing arseholes, shit parcels, incest, explicit oral sex, castration and more.

Finally Divine literally eats dog shit to bring the film to its shocking climax. To see Divine follow a poodle around town until it drops a little turd and then scoop it up and swallow it with a grin is true underground cult entertainment ! *Pink Flamingos* was picked up for distribution by the fledgling New Line Cinema and became an instant midnight movie classic.

Pink Flamingos was and is Waters most infamous film. It brought him instant notoriety and is still a shockingly taboo-breaking film. Funny, horrible, shocking, offensive, tasteless – all are words that come to mind. For years it only circulated on video until "Criterion" released a high quality laserdisc edition which was followed by a director's cut restored for DVD.

Pink Flamingos was followed by *Female Trouble*, which was dedicated to the Manson family and released in 1974. It is set in 1960 Baltimore where Dawn Davenport (played by the plump and beautiful Divine) is living the life of a school brat. She delights in wearing her hair as high as possible and picking fights at school when she is not smoking in the toilets.



As we head into Christmas she is looking forward to the sexy cha-cha heels she has been promised, but it is not to be. Her parents make her sing Christmas hymns and give her a set of "morally uplifting" flatties. Dawn flies into a rage

and screams “ *fuck you and fuck Christmas*” after shoving her mother into the family Christmas tree !

She runs away from home crying and is picked up by Earl Peterson, a slovenly obese man who drives her to an isolated location for a good time. Dawn becomes pregnant and phones Earl to demand money, who tells her to “*get the hook*” and finally to “*fuck herself*”. A rather truer description has never been spoken since divine played both roles !! Watch for the large skidmarks on Earl’s undies, priceless !



Climactic scene from *Female Trouble*

We now move into the ultimate experience of a dysfunctional family. Dawn is a large go-go dancer, Taffy likes to play car accidents, her two friends are cat burglars and her aunt Ida (Edith Massey) constantly works on her son Gator trying to turn him gay. The last thing she wants is for him to have a wife and children, move to Detroit and work in the auto industry.

The tale gets more and more convoluted as Dawn is hired by Donald and Donna Dasher, who run the local Lipstick Beauty Salon. They believe, like Jean Genet, that crime and beauty are connected and encourage Dawn to start a life of crime. Violence leads to more violence including the kidnapping of Ida, the cutting off of her hand and Ida disfiguring Dawn with acid in retribution.

Dawn now perceives herself as a crime queen and devises a stage act to express her new identity. Her act includes jumping on a trampoline, rolling in a playpen filled with dead fish, shoving them between her legs and throwing them at the audience.

Finally she yells, “*Who wants to be famous. Who wants to die for art?*”, and commences shooting into the crowd.

Female Trouble then offers us a marvellous court drama with the Dashers and Ida pleading innocent and Dawn believing that her upcoming death will make her a cultural icon. As she is placed in the eclectic chair, she gives a final speech as though she has won an Academy Award; finally crime, art and cinema have come together in the life of Dawn Davenport.

“ I’d like to thank all the wonderful people that made this great moment in my life come true. My daughter Taffy, who died in order to further

my career. My friends Chicklette and Concetta who should be here with me today. All the fans who died so fashionably and gallantly at my nightclub act. And especially all those wonderful people who were kind enough to read about me in the newspapers and watch me on the television news shows. Without all of you, my career could never have gotten this far. It was you that I burn for and it is you that I will die for! Please remember, I love every fucking one of you!”

Starting with *Desperate Living* (1977), Waters began casting real-life convicted criminals (Patricia Hearst) as well as well known actors (Sonny Bono, Debbie Harry, Tab Hunter, Traci Lords) in his films. Since Divine was not available he developed what could be best described as a lesbian fairy tale. But this is John Waters, so don’t expect it to be politically correct !



The story centers on mentally unbalanced housewife Peggy Gravel and her obese maid Grizelda (Jean Hill). After Grizelda murders Peggy’s husband in a fit of rage by sitting on his face and suffocating him, the two women seek refuge in the town of Mortville. Mortville is a sort of mythic or dark fairy tale town which does not exist on any map and is made up of outsiders, criminals and sexual deviants who’ve fled the normal world.

They move in with Mole McHenry, a very butch



The truly voluptuous Jean Hill

dyke who wants a sex change and her lover Muffy St.Jacques (played by aging burlesque star Liz Renay). Sadly Mortville is not a fairytale kingdom. It is ruled by an evil queen named Carlotta who loves to abuse her citizens, including regularly spanking young male members of the populace. Princess Coo-Coo is working with the Queen to poison the town's population to keep them in submission, but soon a revolution is underfoot and Carlotta ends up being the dish served at the town's revolutionary feast with an apple stuffed in her mouth.

While *Desperate Living* is not one of the most appreciated Water's films, Divine being notable by her absence. It actually has a lot going for it, including some new actors such as Liz Renay and Jean Hill who inject a different sort of vitality into the Dreamlanders team.

There are some truly outrageous scenes including the suffocation of Peggy's husband between Grizelda's truly humongous legs, the woman's sex "beat" where breasts are struck through holes in the wall and a forced sex change !

Edith Massey as Queen Carlotta



Divine & Tab Hunter in *Polyester*

Edith Massey as Queen Carlotta is just plain adorable.

Polyester, made in 1981, actually moved Waters into the mainstream – well, a little. It was the first Waters film with a medium budget and was actually marketed to a fairly wide audience. It was also produced in Odorama. On entry to the cinema you receive a card which included a selection of smells from the movie, from the nice to very awful. It was a gimmick which made the film truly original

Francine Fishpaw is an average overweight housewife living in a suburban house with her family. (played superbly by Divine in all her 300lb glory). She tries to be a good mother and wife and keep peace with her neighbours but her family is a nightmare. Her husband Elmer, runs a porno theatre and there are regular anti - porn protests in front of the theatre and their home. Her son Dexter is a druggie and has a foot fetish which involves violently stamping on woman's feet. (unbeknown to Francine he is "The Baltimore Stomper" wanted by police). Lulu, her daughter, loves "aggro punks" and is seeing Bobo, the local bad boy who has got her pregnant and now she needs an abortion.

Her best friend is Cuddles (played by Edith Massey) who is a gentle if not a little simple soul. Cuddles has inherited big bucks and is planning the debutante ball she never had when she was younger. Francine would love to attend but she finds Elmer is having an affair so hits the bottle big time. Luckily however, she meets a new man, Todd Tomorrow, owner of Baltimore's finest art-house drive-in cinema and begins an affair of her own. But will she find happiness ?

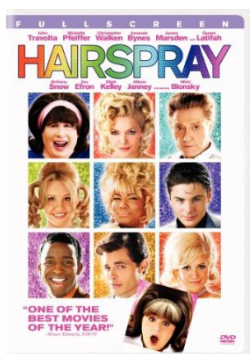
Polyester began John Water's experiment with



The Battlelines are drawn in *Hairspray*

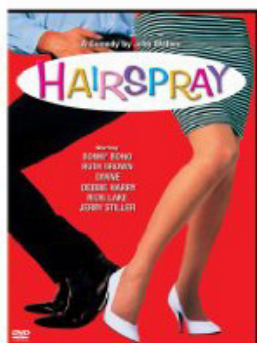
more mainstream, though always somewhat subversive cinema, which continued with the musicals *Hairspray* and *Cry Baby*.

Hairspray, made in 1988, was a rave success reaching a much wider audience than ever before with the John Waters style but this time in a very subtle manner. For god's sake it even got a PG rating! *Hairspray* went on to be turned into a stage musical which won eight Tony Awards in 2003 including Best Musical!



In 2008 it was adapted into a new film with John Travolta taking the role of Edna Turnblad which was originally played by Divine and other notables such as Queen Latifah and Zac Efron. This was a surprising success and brought *Hairspray* to a whole new audience. Personally I did not like it as much as the original, however, it certainly came pretty close and the new songs (written for the musical) certainly embodied the "John Waters" spirit.

Hairspray is a musical comedy about racial integration and is the most loved of all of John Waters films. It is still watched by people of all ages who are routinely horrified when they see other Waters films. Tracy Turnblad (Ricki Lake) is an overweight "hair hopper" who dreams of being a dancer on the Corny Collins Show, which was based on the The Buddy Deane Show, a real-life Baltimore music program. When her dreams come true and she finds herself battling it out for the cov-



Johnny Depp & Traci Lords from *Cry Baby*

eted Miss Auto Show title, there are greater issues at stake. In Baltimore, blacks and whites are strictly segregated and the only time they are seen on The Corny Collins Show is at Negro day. The time for revolution is at hand!

Hairspray also starred Sonny Bono, Debbie Harry, Jerry Stiller, Pia Zadora and Ric Ocasek from The Cars and kick-started the career of Ricki Lake.

By the time of *Cry Baby* in 1990 Divine had passed away, so Waters looked for new ways to express his message. Since *Hairspray* had been such a success he had a large budget and decided to make another musical. He was able to hire quite an amazing array of stars including Johnny Depp, Amy Locane, Susan Tyrrell, Polly Bergen, Iggy Pop, Ricki Lake, Traci Lords, Joe Dallesandro, Kim McGuire and Stephen Mailer. It is really like a fifties teen idol movie with "Cry Baby" as an Elvis lookalike.

Wade "Cry Baby" Walker is a sensitive teen who lives by his own code with his strange and unusual family. The Drapes are a wild family



The Drapes

which loves to drink, party hard and drive very fast cars. The gang includes his hugely pregnant sister Pepper (who already has two kids), her boyfriend Milton, their friend Hatchet-Face (who is so ugly she is a truly beauty) and sex addict Wanda (played by sex addict and porn star Traci Lords). They live at Turkey Point, a woodland camp run by Grandma and Grandpa (Susan Tyrrell and Iggy Pop). Cry-Baby fronts a band which is made up of the Drape family.

He has a love interest in Allison, however, there is a problem; she is a Square. And Drapes and Squares do not mix, especially since Allison attends a grooming school and is being courted by all the good boys. When Allison decides to "go bad" and mix with the Drapes, the battle lines are drawn and a strange and wonderful musical begins. When Cry Baby was released by Imagine films it was marketed as a teen film and a lot was cut to edit it down for a general release. The director's cut restores quite a bit of the original footage.

Kathleen Turner starred in the quirky 1994 John Waters film *Serial Mum*. Life seems to be normal in this middle class neighbourhood, however, many of the woman in the street are receiving obscene phone calls, very obscene calls. Soon we realize that the pure, innocent wife and mother is not only making the calls but killing off those who stand in her way. Kathleen



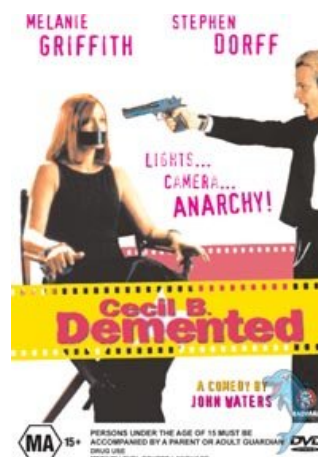
Kathleen Turner as Beverly Sutphin—devoted mother and killer.

Turner as Beverly Sutphin, the beautiful yet murderous middle class serial killer is superb embodying the true mood of the obsessive and the strangely disturbed. Serial Mum brings to the audience Waters interest in serial killers, murderers and crime which would be again explored in his narration of the 2008 series "Til Death do Us Part" which explored marriages which end in murder.

Pecker, Waters 1998 exploration of the life of an independent photographer starred Edward Fur-

soft. It still has quirky characters, unusual crazes (tea bagging is a rather nice touch) and an excellent plot, but does lack the bite of a lot of Waters earlier films.

Cecil B Demented which dates from 2000 was a real return to form for Waters. In many ways it went right back to his earliest films. Just as in *Eat Your Make Up* models were kidnapped and forced to model, in *Cecil B Demented* actors are kidnapped by a group of radical cinema terrorists. Certainly a politically incorrect subject !



Stephen Dorff is Cecil B Demented (a pun on Cecil B. DeMille) who has formed a movement to transform Hollywood. At its centre is a cell of filmmaking terrorists – the Sprocket Holes . They are true revolutionaries having their favourite director's names tattooed on their arms and taking vows of celibacy for cinema !

They decide to kidnap Honey Whitlock, a fairly vacuous superstar played by Melanie Griffith with the intent to force her to act in an underground film, Raving Beauties. Raving Beauties is to be a spontaneous docudrama indicting Hollywood, corporate movie making, censorship and family entertainment. Honey is slowly "brainwashed" to follow the radical line and star in the film. This is especially amusing since the film stars Patty Hearst who was "conditioned" by the radical SLA to be an urban terrorist ! Art certainly imitates life in this John Waters film.



Stephen Dorff and Alicia Witt in *Cecil B Demented*

It is as though Waters realised he needed to return to his more radical roots and hence *Cecil B Demented* is extremely violent, perverse and outrageous. It is also filled with music, its score offers rap, punk and even some Liberace.

Looking back from 2004 at John Waters' career you begin to wonder what he could do next. Divine, Edith Massey and so many of the Dreamlanders were dead and others were certainly past their prime. He had pushed many boundaries and even moved into musicals and the mainstream. As Waters watched the development of the right wing throughout the US and the world and the way in which censorship went hand in hand with repression, he decided to make the ultimate sex comedy !

While certainly a major risk for any studio, it just shows how much industry significance he has developed in that he was able to get such a controversial film made.

A Dirty Shame was a real shock to those who were used to Waters more "middle of the road" humour and were not aware of his earlier films such as *Pink Flamingos*. Starring a new team including Tracey Ullman, Johnny Knoxville, Selma Blair, Chris Isaak and Suzanne Shepherd as well as a few old Dreamlanders such as Mink Stole Waters created a tale of religion, spirituality, sex, repression and fetish – what a combination.

The plot is based on a rare medical condition where an injury to the head can lead to sex ad-

Sex Messiah Johnny Knoxville



Tracey Ullman after she had seen the light with her daughter "Udders" (Selma Blair)

diction. While some see this sex addiction as an illness, others such as Johnny Knoxville believe it is a religious calling. He is the messiah of sex and calls disciples to him to explore all manner of sexual excess. He is blessed with a very special long tongue and can stimulate orgasms by with a simple touch.



Knoxville is the leader of a strange sex movement which is searching for the ultimate sex act to bring about a global orgasm. Together they explore every possible sexual fetish (and I mean every) from infantilism to bears, BDSM to transvestism, to be honest the well known fetishes look run-of-the-mill in this film ! As long as it is consensual, they will do it.

Tracey Ullman has been trying to keep her daughter, Udders (Selma Blair with huge breasts) away from the radical sex mission until she too receives a head injury and sees the light. Soon Ullman is visiting an old people's home and doing the hokey pokey picking up water bottles with her vagina. A scene which will not be quickly forgotten.

Now the sex missionaries must wage war against "The Neuters" a group of right wingers who hate sex.



Bears, Cubs and Otters in *A Dirty Shame*

It is hard to describe *A Dirty Shame* except that it explores every possible sexual variation to create a very sex positive vision of life. It is packed with a horny jazz soundtrack, filthy jokes, nudity and lots more.

Above all it is a lot of fun. While many John Waters films pushed boundaries in ways which seemed shocking even offensive, this film does it all in a fun and amusing way. If you are opened-minded you will adore *A Dirty Shame*.

At the same time, as one may expect, the censors hated it. Even in the US where you can release nearly anything on DVD this received a NC 17 rating (the equivalent to an Aussie R) which locked it out of many markets including stores such as Walmart. In the end Waters also released a more restrained edition for general release. In Australia it was released uncut as an R-Rated film.

There is also a seriously cool score available on CD which includes such songs as Eager Beaver Baby, Hump-a-baby, Tony's Got Hot Nuts and more.



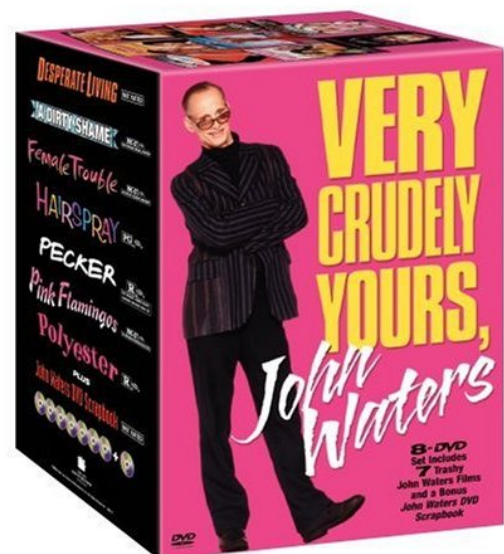
What will John Waters do next? It would be hard to top *A Dirty Shame*, so Waters decided to go in a totally new direction, one we would least expect, a children's film! Waters is making a Christmas movie called *Fruitcake*. I kid you not.

The plot goes something like this. Fruitcake is a boy named after his favourite dessert. He runs away from home during the holidays after he and his parents are caught shop-lifting meat. He then meets up with a runaway girl raised by two gay men who is searching for her birth mother and they have a great adventure... Johnny Knoxville and Parker Posey are already on board.

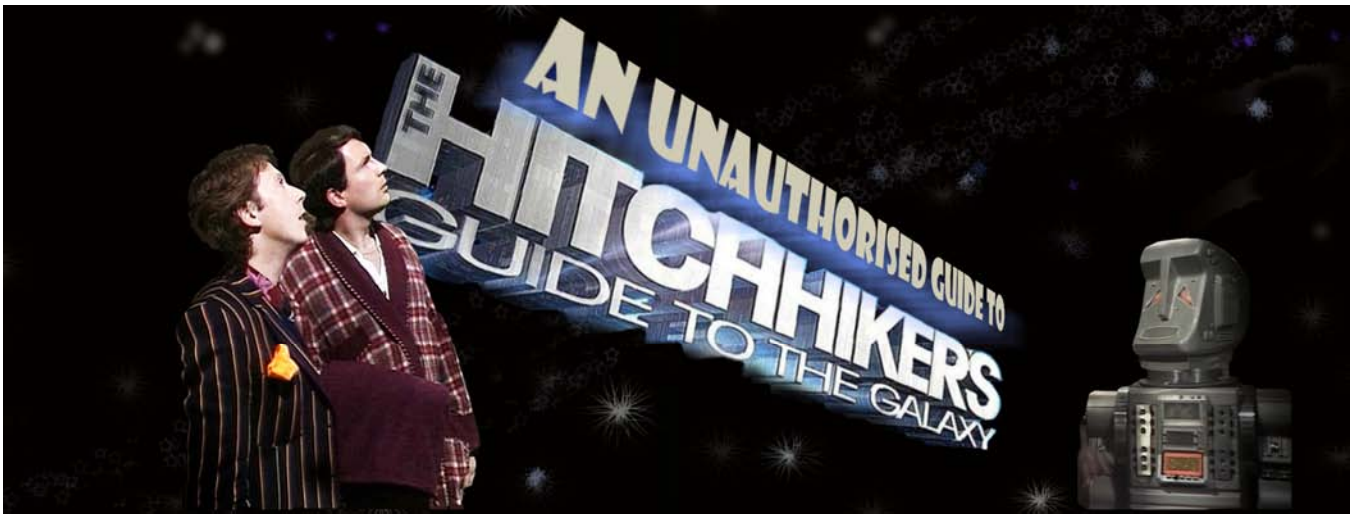
One really never knows what is hidden deep in Waters' psyche and considering that for some forty years he has been challenging, shocking and entertaining us, I am sure there is a lot more to come yet.

The films of John Waters are available in various editions, *Pink Flamingos* is still banned in Australia and currently *Desperate Living* has only been released on Video in Region 4.

The best way to purchase John Waters titles is from US sellers such as Deep Discount or Amazon.



An especially nice edition is *The John Waters Collection Very Crudely Yours* released in the US which includes *A Dirty Shame NC-17 Version*, *Desperate Living*, *Female Trouble*, *Hairspray*, *Pecker*, *Pink Flamingos* and *Polyester*. There are also double DVD sets released in the US which are from the *John Waters Collection*, for example, *John Waters Collection #2* includes both *Polyester* and *Desperate Living*.



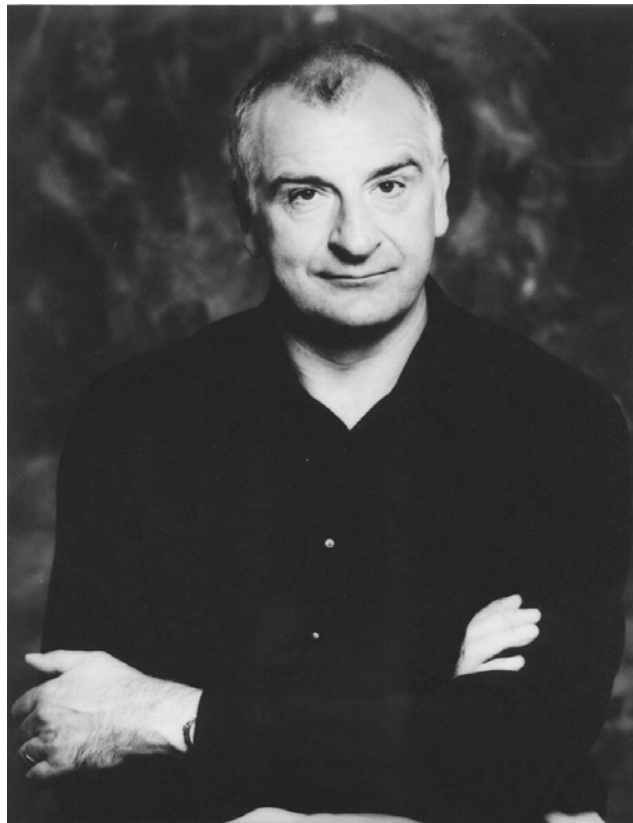
Douglas Adams was born in Cambridge, England in 1952. He had a troubled childhood, especially after his parents divorced, but showed signs of his coming creativity from his early schooldays. He acknowledged Frank Halford, a master at his school, as one of his earliest influences. Halford had just written a script for a new BBC show called *Doctor Who* that Adams parodied in an end-of-term play that he wrote. On one memorable occasion Halford gave Adams ten out of ten for a story and when writers block and lack of self-confidence settled in Adams would remind himself that "Frank Halford once gave me ten out of ten, and at some fundamental level I must be able to do it".

Growing up in the 1960s Adams was naturally affected by the weird humour of the *Monty Python* shows. He was fortunate in being able to go to Cambridge University, where so many of the Python crowd had come from. "I wanted to be John Cleese and it took me some time to realise that the job was in fact taken". He soon discovered that he was not really an actor anyway and settled for writing sketches.

After Cambridge he collaborated with Python's Graham Chapman for a while but then his career seemed to come to an end. During a suc-

cession of fairly menial jobs he was contacted by the BBC to write the series that became *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*.

He went into the project with a lot of ideas but little actual plot. The show evolved week by week with Adams having little knowledge of where it would go next. Nevertheless the show went to air and he began to write a second series.



"I love deadlines. I love the whooshing noise they make as they go by"

All his shows had been successful and translated well into books, so he was at least financially well off. He branched out in the late eighties to produce two Dirk Gently novels which, while well received, are rather unknown compared to their more famous HHG brother. Adams also wrote a spoof dictionary and a number of short pieces.

His well-educated approach gave him a command of the subtleties of the English language that few other writers have approached. He could construct a sentence that would appear to follow a predictable path, then put a twist in the end that made you read the sentence twice. He also showed a liking for the pun, one of the hardest parts of English humour to translate to other countries.

Bob Estreich

Douglas Adams wrote many short pieces. One of my favourites is "Australia – The Confusing Country"

"The second confusing thing about Australia are the animals.

They can be divided into three categories: Poisonous, Odd, and Sheep. It is true that of the 10 most poisonous arachnids on the planet, Australia has 9 of them. Actually, it would be more accurate to say that of the 9 most poisonous arachnids, Australia has all of them.

Douglas Adams' *Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy*, hereafter called *HHG*,

is now considered a classic piece of British comedy. It has gone through a lot of reincarnations in its transition from radio to TV to stage to film. It began in

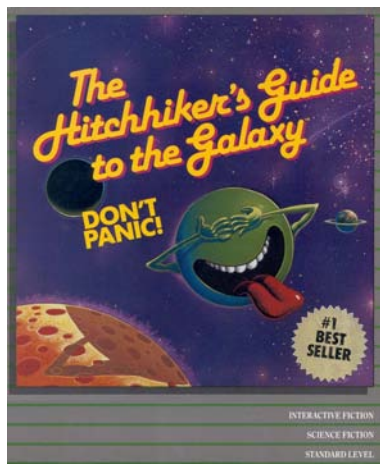
1978 as a short, half-hour series of BBC Radio broadcasts called *Ends of the Earth*, dealing with six alternate ways the earth would end. Adams needed an alien to hold the continuity of the story through the six episodes and he made that alien a reporter for the *HHG*.

The *Guide* became the center of the episodes. By Episode 6 the Earth had only been destroyed once but *HHG* was firmly set into the story.

The series was broadcast twice in 1978 alone – it quickly became a firm cult favourite with many comedy fans. It has to be conceded that this style of humour doesn't always appeal to non-British comedy fans, or even to all British fans. Its humour is often subtle or vicious, it lampoons many types of people that we probably all know examples of. It pokes fun at depression, big institutions, and the aspirations of the little man. The British love their eccentrics and they are all in the *HHG* story somewhere.

The episodes became three books and as more books were added they became known as "the increasingly inaccurately named *Hitchhikers Guide* trilogy".

The five main books are:



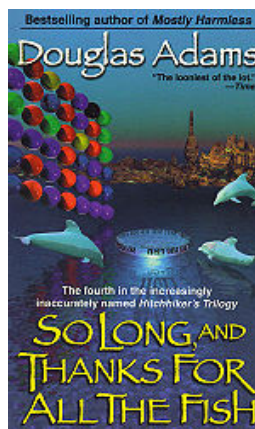
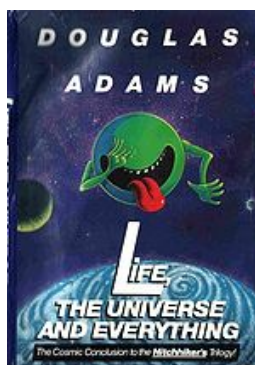
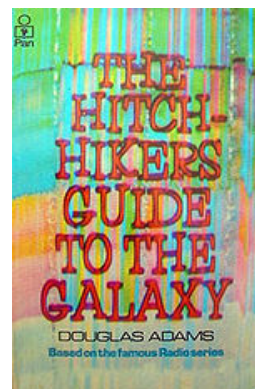
The Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy
The Restaurant At The End Of The Universe
Life, The Universe, and Everything
So Long, And Thanks For All The Fish
Mostly Harmless

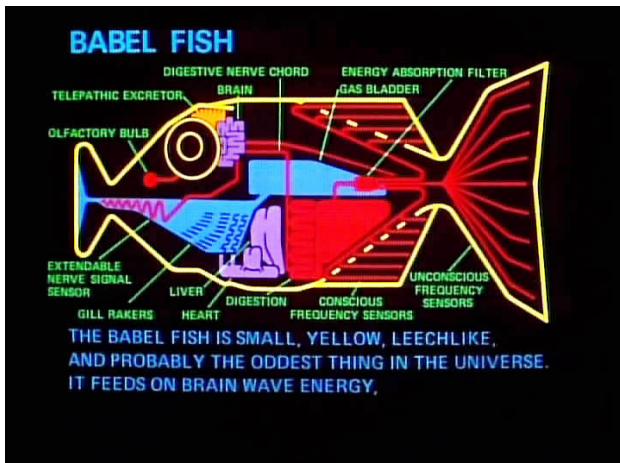
Another book is being prepared, called *And Another Thing*.

Briefly, although it's hard to be brief about a plot-line that spanned five books and was still going at the author's death, the plot goes like this:

The *HHG* is an electronic book that is used to explain parts of the plot as the story develops. Although it is often wildly inaccurate it features the words "Don't Panic" on the cover. It describes Earth as "Harmless" in the early version or "Mostly Harmless" in the revised edition.

Earth is blown up by a Vogon Constructor Fleet to make room for a hyperspace Bypass. The Vogons are a rather vicious mindlessly bureaucratic race who make another appearance in the 2005 *HHG* film.





An entry from The Hitchhikers Guide..

The ships hung in the air exactly the same way that bricks don't

The only survivors are Arthur Dent (confused, mild-mannered human whose reaction to everything is usually "Well, that's it then – we're all going to die") and his friend Ford Prefect, who turns out to be an alien investigator for the *HHG*. They escape Earth by hitchhiking on one of the Vogon ships only to be cast into space when they are found, after learning a little of the evils of Vogon poetry.

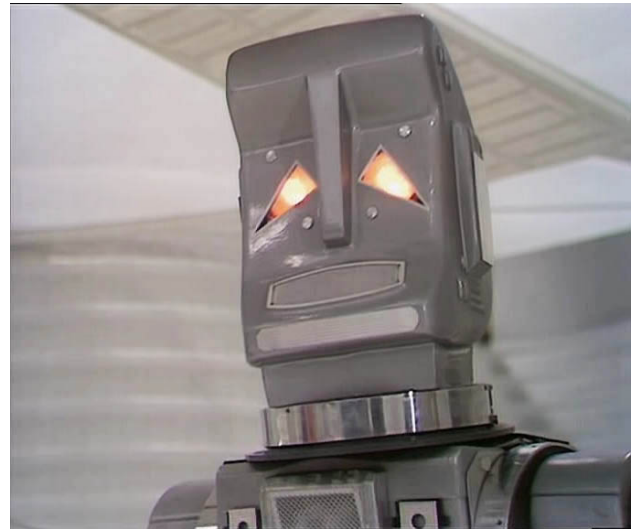
They are then improbably rescued by a stolen spaceship carrying Zaphod Beeblebrox, President of the Galaxy and major egotist; Trillian, a bright young Earth girl who took off for adventure with Zaphod, and Marvin, a seriously depressed android with (so he tells us often) a brain the size of a planet.

....hyperspace. It's rather unpleasantly like being drunk.

What's so awful about being drunk?

Ask a glass of water

Ford Prefect and Arthur Dent in *HHG* (UK)



Marvin the Paranoid Android in *HHG* (UK)

This unlikely group find the legendary lost planet of Magrathea. It specialised in constructing custom planets. Here Arthur discovers that Earth was not a planet after all but a supercomputer designed by an alien race that wants to know the Answer to the Great Question – Life, the Universe, and Everything. An earlier computer, Deep Thought, cryptically told them that the answer was 42. This was meaningless, so Earth was constructed to find out what the actual question was. It was destroyed by the Vogons five minutes before the program finished.

After going through a time warp they find themselves at the Restaurant At The End Of The Universe. It is literally a place where the Universe reaches entropy and implodes. They leave the Restaurant by stealing a spaceship (Zaphod has a very relaxed attitude to other peoples' property) which is unfortunately programmed to dive into a local sun as part of a rock music spectacular.

Their next stop is an Ark ship carrying colonists to a new planet. The real colonists are on ships that are due to follow on later, but this one contains hairdressers, advertising executives, used car salesmen, economists and the rest of the useless third of society. It was explained to them that when the rest of the colonists arrive it is so important to know that they can get a good haircut.

They turn out to be quite useless as colonists, though. When they try to invent the wheel, they make it square.



Marvin the “cutesy” Paranoid Android in *HHG* (US)

When Ford points out that it is the single simplest invention ever made, an advertising executive retorts

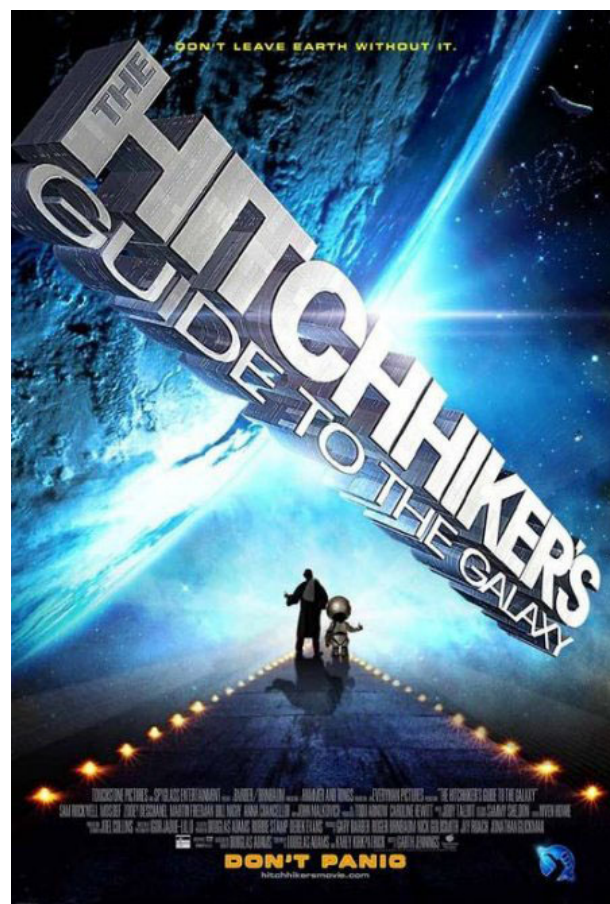
All right, wise guy – YOU tell us what colour it should be!

Arthur and Ford then make a startling discovery about this new little blue-green planet at the outer end of a spiral arm of the galaxy.

This basic plotline was followed in most of the stories but Douglas Adams had a habit of amplifying bits of it for different productions. Thus every new script – book, stage show, whatever – was a little different from the earlier ones. He kept introducing new characters and concepts and amplifying old ideas that had only been briefly mentioned. Throughout the *HHG* history, he used the Guide to tie these loose ends together.

The success of the books can be measured by their being translated into 30 languages by 2005 and made into a computer game and comic books. The radio shows were available on cassette and CD.

The definitive version of *HHG* was the TV series produced in 1981.



This was a lavish production for the BBC with much use of computer graphics, many little CGI asides provided by the *HHG*, and wonderful characterisations provided by quality British actors such as Peter Jones (the voice of the Guide) and Simon Jones (Arthur Dent). Simon Jones in his increasingly shabby dressing gown and pyjamas forever became Arthur Dent in the minds of most fans.

By contrast, probably the most disappointing version is the 2005 U.S.-made film that seems to have been “dumbed down” for U.S. audiences. This comment may seem patronising but if you compare it with the BBC serial the film will leave you vaguely uncomfortable. It is slick, but the eccentricities of the characters have been softened as if not to offend anyone. Marvin the Paranoid Android has been made cute rather than depressed.

Even using veteran British actor Alan Rickman to provide Marvin’s voice could not change the feeling that this was a promotion for a toy robot rather than a seriously depressed android. Another Briton, Steven Fry, did the voice of the book, but somehow he just didn’t carry the same authority as the BBC version’s Peter Jones.



The Vogons (HHG U.S)

The addition of U.S. actors into what is essentially a British-style comedy largely confused the film. It is a common thing to use an English actor in a U.S. film to give an important character credibility (Alec Guinness in *Star Wars*, Alan Rickman in *Dogma*), but the U.S. film seems to have reduced its integrity in the process. It was not helped by the massive and confusing rearrangement of the plot elements.

Many of the clever puns are missing, replaced by the one-liner-and-wait-for-the-audience-laughter style of delivery so common in U.S. sitcoms. The jokes are more obvious, as if to make sure that you get them. The subtle twists of language are missing.

The film did have its flashes of inspiration. The emphasis of the plot changed to reflect more strongly the mindless bureaucracy of the Vogons, an area Adams had not previously explored much, and its resistance to new ideas. Adams wrote many of the changes himself and there are some nice touches included in the script.

One I liked was the paddle device that swung up out of the ground and smacked you in the head if you had any sort of new idea. This is classic Adams as well as classic American slapstick.

In spite of these negatives, the film was a modest success. I suspect it may have had more to do with *HHG* fans going to see the film out of curiosity than because of the film's merits, though. Many fans did not bother to buy the film on DVD, a measure of the general dissatisfaction. Even Adams described the whole process

of writing, funding and filming as "twenty years of constipation".

I recommend reading the books rather than just watching the DVDs. They contain a wealth of detail, sly humor and extra plotlines that have not appeared yet on film or DVD. Douglas Adams' writing style is very easy to get into.

The less confining nature of a book let him explore many of the loose ends of plot that the restraints of a film could not develop. It is probably better to regard the books as the main plot and the DVDs and film as condensed offshoots. The BBC series, for instance, only covers elements of the first three books.

As well as the previous five books, further writings are found in the below books.

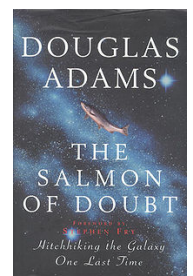
And Another Thing

Author Eoin Colfer was commissioned in 2008 to write *And Another Thing*, the sixth book in the series.



The Salmon of Doubt

The Salmon of Doubt is a collection of posthumous works by Douglas Adams, including some storylines he said were better suited to *HHG*.



These were retrieved from his computer after his death.

Douglas Adams died on 11th May 2001 while the U.S. film was shooting.

The galaxy lives on, a little more pleasant for his having been part of it.

The Douglas Adams Website

The Douglas Adams website includes all sorts of information including outlines of all of his published works, annual lectures held in his honour, articles and details of the charities he supported.

Web: <http://www.douglasadams.com/>

Kevin Rudd & The New Wowserism

On Wednesday 3rd June 2009 the ABC comedy program "The Chaser's War on Everything" ran a skit called "Make a Realistic Wish". It was based on the "Make a Wish Foundation" which provides free wishes to children who are terminally ill. The skit involved a fictitious foundation ("The Make a Realistic Wish Foundation") which offered more realistic wishes for children. For example, a child who wanted to go to Disneyland was offered a pencil case and a child who wanted to see Zac Efron was given a stick. It ended with the comment that the foundation *"helps thousands of kids to lower their extravagance and selfishness"* and ended with *"Why go to any trouble when they're only going to die anyway?"*

It is fair to say this was a tasteless if not potentially offensive skit to many viewers, but not all and the ABC switchboard lit up with complaints. However what happened next is at the heart of the "New Wowserism" in Australia. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd told the Chaser crew that they should "hang their heads in shame" and the ABC banned the Chaser show for two weeks as punishment. This, of course, is not the first time P.M Rudd has made comments on such issues. He complained about an earlier Chaser song about people being made into saints after their death (with jokes about the death of Steve Irwin) and denounced Bill Henson for his nude, but



The Chaser Team



P.M Rudd looking down his nose at you !

considered by many to be artistically significant, photographs of teens.

These comments and recent trends in government legislation show a marked movement towards conservative social policies even within the labour movement. While everyone was aware of the right wing views of John Howard and his conservative social agenda, P.M Rudd seems to have moved the Labour movement towards a different sort of social agenda based on political correctness and censorship. In many ways this is far more dangerous than the conservative agenda of John Howard as P.M Rudd seems so "moderate" talking about removing discrimination against homosexuals and making an apology to the so called "stolen generation". However, underneath this "moderate" tolerance is a form of politically correct paternalism that is eating away at the free speech of the average Australia and controlling our access to media and resources.

The first thing we need to ask in a democracy is what should be the limits of "free speech?" While the answer may vary according to political persuasion, I would argue that the base line should be related to slander, defamation and/or violence. Free Speech in a real democracy should only be curtailed in so much that it directly infringes the rights of an individual or group. Accordingly, vilification and advocating violence against any minority should be unacceptable as should the slander or defaming an individual.

Beyond that there should not be any curtailment of the right for free speech whether it be in jour-

nalism or
comedy.
That being
said even the



second should be limited in relation to the public's right to know in regards to news reporting and this should be balanced with the significance of the individual in the public eye and its relation to their position. While it may matter than a politician is accepting bribes and this should be exposed. Why is it significant that Bill Clinton, for example, had sex in the White House or whether a footballer had group sex?

It is ludicrous, if not a little embarrassing, that the Prime Minister of a country as significant as Australia takes time away from such major issues as the world economic crisis or terrorism to make comments on whether a given comedy show is "tasteless" or whether a given artist is acceptable or not. I am sure you would not see the Prime Minister of the U.K. Gordon Brown or President Obama making such provincial comments.

This is the essence of the new growing politically correct Wowserism in Australia. It is not a carefully thought out defining of the limits of free speech, but a certain narrow Protestant morality that is encroaching into the public discourse. P.M Rudd has illustrated this tendency time and time again. For example, with gay rights, he has been happy to remove a wide range of laws which are prejudicial but will not budge on civil unions or gay marriage, Why? Because it may "offend" the public somehow and would not be in line with "community standards".

The "community standards" argument is an intriguing one since democracy

is not usually about "mob rule" and not about removing the rights of the individual for the majority. One could equally argue that the "community standard" in Nazi Germany was anti-semitism and in deep south of the US, slavery. In the fifties the "community standard" kept women in their homes, denied the right to abortion and allowed wholesale domestic violence. Just because these were the general "standards" of the period does not make any of them correct, then or now.

We could also include here the debate about creationism, just because a very percentage of the US population believes it is correct does not in any way disprove the indisputable factual basis of evolution.

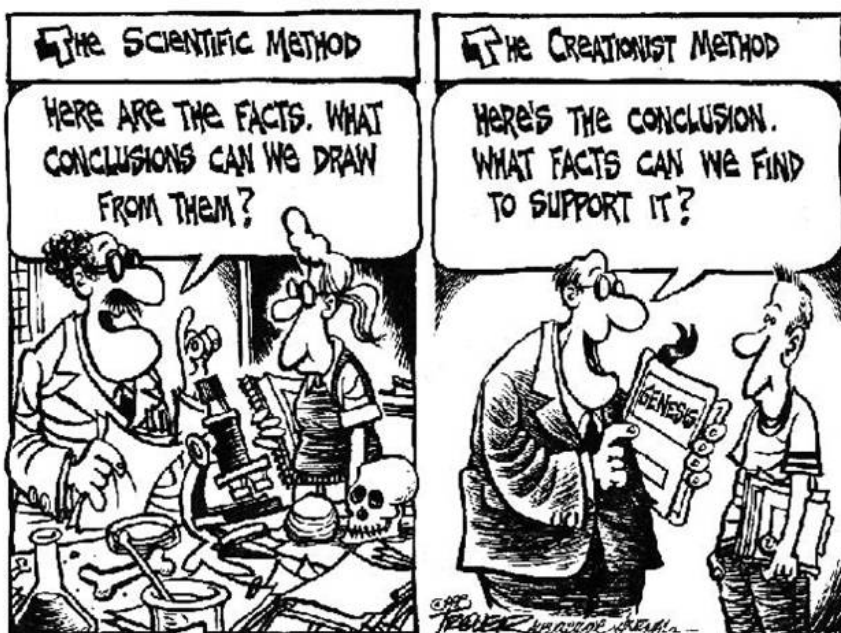
Community Values, so often, are manipulated by those who have the loudest voice. While politicians talk about moral "values", in most cases these are the standards of the Churches and other power brokers, rather than the values that the average person holds.

With most complaints about TV content, for example, it is a very small minority who actually voice their opinion and these are nearly uniformly negative. This does not mean that the general public disagrees with certain content but that those who wish to enforce their values on the public simply run better campaigns. Most people will not write in if they like a show, but motivated minorities with pressure from "power

brokers" certainly do. Accordingly, it is simply not credible to use "complaints" as the basis for making decisions on community values.

Even if a majority of the population found something offensive it should not, by necessity, make it illegal. The criteria for censorship must be based on a *provable threat* against an individual or a group, rather than some nebulous inferred standard created by minority pressure.

We should also note how these power brokers work to manipulate general opinion to reflect their own. They begin with claiming the



high moral ground and then try to enforce their values on everyone else. Whether it be PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) or the church, propaganda is used to try and manipulate public opinion and then claim that the community backs their stance. A similar approach is regularly used by governments. Too often so called “family values” and “community standards” are simply terms used for the opinions of the loudest and most obnoxious religious or political extremist.

Sadly this has also happened with various referendums. The classic example being the referendum on the republic held by the Liberal government under John Howard. By manipulating the debate and carefully “framing” the referendum questions, the government was able to carefully condition the result and achieve the negative return they desired.

P.M Rudd also frames the term “community standards” as a codeword for “middle class values”. While he will decry racism, sexism and homophobia, he still enforces a form of Protestant paternalism on the Australian community through his approach to freedom of speech and censorship. He is careful, however, not to appear sectarian and mention which brand of Protestantism he prefers.

P.M. Rudd applies his “wowserism” most clearly in his approach to censorship. There is still no Australia wide “XXX” category for film and while some states have a “NVE” category (non-violent erotica) this is not federally endorsed. (This is even more ridiculous considering that all surveys have shown that the vast majority of Australian’s favour legalisation of XXX products. But again P.M Rudd does not wish to “offend” the religious community and uses this as an excuse for inaction). When it comes to computer games, no adult games are allowed so there is not even an “R” rating for computer games at all. The censorship of the internet has a similar tone. While certainly we agree that child pornography and any depiction of non consensual sex should be banned, beyond this surely it is a matter of personal taste or preference. But, no, again whether it be film or the internet, the new “wowserism” wants to tell us what is best for us – at least, according to their values and beliefs.

This becomes even more obvious when you examine Stephen Conroy’s attempt to filter the internet to deal with child pornography. When lists were leaked of banned content it was found that some 70% of what has been blocked was run-of-the-mill adult content. Surely with the re-



Get Up– Save the Net Campaign
Web: <http://www.getup.org.au/>

sources of the Federal police and international agencies child pornography can be handled as a criminal matter without the need for limiting the private rights of individuals to use the internet in their homes and denying access to a vast array of legal content. We are now in a dangerous time for freedom of speech and media. Battle lines have been drawn, in many cases, using the threat of terrorism as an excuse for all manner of social control.

Personally I find some skits such as those in “The Chasers war on everything” a little infantile, but I realize that if we allow the term “tasteless” or “offensive” to be used to justify censorship, then this is the thin edge of the wedge and it is hard to know where it will stop. The question we need to consider is if we removed everything someone found tasteless or offensive (according to their own beliefs and standards) then how bland would our media end up being? As Voltaire said” I might disagree with what you say, but would defend to the death your right to say it.” Personal taste should not be the limit of a democracy, whether that person be a priest, politician or a Prime Minister.

In addition, while many of us many find porn to be rather boring the reality is that as soon as we allow censors to limit what we see, then it is only a further step towards larger efforts at social control. It may be explicit sex or violence today and ideas tomorrow. Let’s not forget that after censorship comes propaganda, and that changes the “community values” to conform to those who wish to condition it.

While the “new wowserism” of P.M Rudd may seem at first benign, simply a comment here and there about things being tasteless or filtering the internet to “protect children”, the truth is that once the precedent is set it is hard to know where it will end.

ANTI-CENSORSHIP RESOURCES GUIDE



Refused Classification

Highly recommended site documenting films and computer games which have been censored for release in the Australian market.

Web: <http://www.refused-classification.com/>

The Chopping List

Documents in extensive details cuts to films released in Australia.

Web: http://www.cosmos.net.au/~hologram/chopping/list_home.html



Electronic Frontiers Australia
Protecting and promoting on-line
civil liberties in Australia

Electronic Frontiers Australia

A well established organization concerned about all forms of censorship, with a particular emphasis on internet filtering.

Web: <http://www.efa.org.au/>

Internet Censorship & Civil Liberties in Australia

Web: <http://danny.oz.au/freedom/>



18+ Ratings for Games Campaign

Very comprehensive site focused on the need for a R Rating category for video games.



Web: <http://www.sexparty.org.au>

DVD Compare

Web: <http://www.dvdcompare.net/comparisons/>

Want to know what has been cut from different versions of your favourite DVD ? Differences between regional releases ? Check out DVD Compare.

Pre Certificate UK

Web: <http://www.pre-cert.co.uk/>

A database of all the video tapes released in the UK and Australia up until mid-80's before censorship removed them from the shelves.

Melon Farmers

Incredible site documenting worldwide censorship. Excellent news feeds.

Web: <http://www.melonfarmers.co.uk/>

Somebody think of the Children !

<http://www.somebodythinkofthechildren.com/>

A very rational site examining the extremes which censorship and campaign of moralism which is sweeping Australia. Offers commentary on all aspects of the debate from TV and books to the internet, film and DVD.

No Censorship You Tube Channel

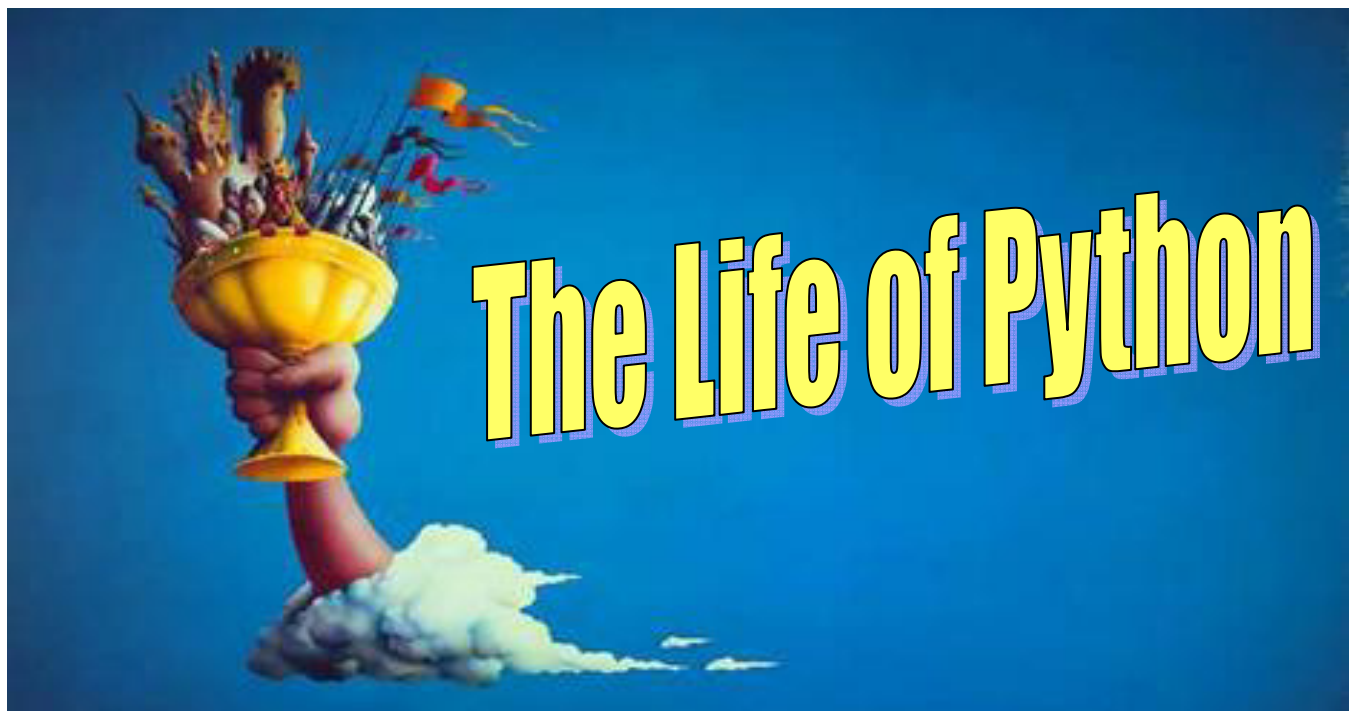
<http://www.youtube.com/user/nocensorshipaus>

Videos discussing the state of censorship in Australia.



No Clean Feed Campaign

Web: <http://nocleanfeed.com/action.html>



The Monty Python team was comprised of Graham Chapman, Eric Idle, Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones, John Cleese and Michael Palin. While all were well respected comedians in their own right, they really only made it to the big-time when they created Monty Python's Flying Circus. Even today *Monty Python's Flying Circus* is considered one of the most groundbreaking British comedy sketch series ever made. It first aired on the BBC on October 5, 1969 and included some forty five episodes aired over four series. It was almost axed after the first episode, having only attracted 3% of the audience and with the BBC chiefs stating it was in appalling bad taste. However, even as controversy increased within the BBC over its content, the series popularity began to rise and the rest is history.

Michael Palin and Terry Jones met while at Oxford University, they both had an irreverent atti-



At Last the 1948 Show

The Pythons



tude and an aptitude for quirky but intelligent sketch comedy. They performed in the Oxford Revue but did not believe it would actually lead to anything, being a simple diversion from their studies. John Cleese, Graham Chapman and Eric Idle all met at Cambridge and worked with the University Footlights. Terry Gilliam came later and was introduced to the others by John Cleese who met him in New York while on tour with the University Footlights revue Cambridge Circus.

At this stage many of the future stars of British comedy worked together in some configuration



The Frost Report

or another. In the 1967 *At Last the 1948 Show* Tim Brooke-Taylor, Bill Oddie and Graeme Garden (later to become The Goodies) worked with Champan, Cleese and Idle as well as Jonathan Lynn (who later co wrote *Yes*, *Minister* and *Yes, Prime Minister*).

During this early period the various members of what would later become The Pythons were involved in their own comedy shows including the 1969 *Doctor in the House* written by Cleese and Chapman and *Do Not Adjust Your Set* 1967-1969 written by Palin, Jones and Idle with animations by Terry Gilliam.

It is generally believed that *The Frost Report* was the first time all the Pythons actually started working together and began to develop their unique style of humour. How the team actually started Monty Python's flying Circus is a fascinating tale and one that has nearly become urban legend – the exact truth may never be known!

It seems that Cleese and Chapman had achieved quite a measure of success with both *The Frost Report* and *At Last The 1948 Show* and were offered a BBC contract to make their own program. At the time Chapman was having a hard time and Cleese say him as somewhat of a "complex personality".

Accordingly Cleese decided he would prefer a group of comedians to be involved in the new show. Luckily for him, Palin, Jones, Idle and Gilliam has been offered an ITV series.

Slowly the two teams coalesced with Gilliam being offered the role of animator and the Python team was born and so was *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.



It is hard to capture the truly revolutionary nature of the Flying Circus series. While shows such as *The Frost Report* and *Do not Adjust your Set* had set a precedent in regards to a new approach to humour, the Flying Circus when a lot further. The major innovation it made was a "flow of consciousness" approach to sketches. One sketch would flow into another and a sketch further on in an episode would relate to one earlier.

This approach, supplemented by Gilliam's truly surreal animation style, gave the series a look and feel that was different to anything that was on television, or indeed, in comedy at that time. When you add to this a deliberate exploration of the obscure, surreal and strange, you realize just how radical the series was.

One of the ways in which the team "pushed the boundaries" was to deliberately take a skit to the level of the absurd and simply go with it. A fascinating example of this is with the parrot sketch, now certainly one of the most celebrated moments in comedy.

Originally it was a fairly mundane skit about returning a toaster which did not work but slowly it was pushed to the limit with the toaster re-



placed with a parrot and, accordingly, with various literary descriptions of what it meant for a parrot to be dead!

Mr. Praline: *'E's not pinin! 'E's passed on! This parrot is no more! He has ceased to be! 'E's expired and gone to meet 'is maker! 'E's a stiff! Bereft of life, 'e rests in peace!*

If you hadn't nailed 'im to the perch 'e'd be pushing up the daisies! 'Is metabolic processes are now 'istory! 'E's off the twig! 'E's kicked the bucket, 'e's shuffled off 'is mortal coil, run down the curtain and joined the bleedin' choir invisible!! This is an ex-parrot!!

One of the most obvious questions is how the name Monty Python's Flying Circus was decided on. The team debated many titles including The Toad Elevating Moment, Vaseline Review and Bun, Wackett, Buzzard, Stubble and Boot – I especially love the “Vaseline Review!” In the end they decided on Monty Python as a sort of send up of Field Marshall Lord Montgomery and the English upper class and hence the name evolved into *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. This was still debated right up until the show went to air, however, the BBC advised the name had already been printed in the program and hence it stuck.

It is also interesting to note that the main logo for the show is written in the same font as Pussy's Galore Flying Circus from the James Bond film *Goldfinger* (1964).

The writing of the show was extremely democratic. They usually met at 9am and worked through the day in small teams. Cleese and Chapman usually worked as one team and Jones and Palin as another. Idle tended to write alone. Gilliam would develop animations after they had collectively brainstormed the scripts.

The Fish Slapping Dance



The Ministry of Funny Walks

Only if a skit amused them all did it make it into the show.

The show not only used many innovative and creative comedy techniques but adapted and transformed older forms of comedy. Slapstick was revolutionized and evolved into such hilarious skits as the Ministry for Funny Walks and the Fish Slapping Dance. Cross dressing was used, as was the English comedy tradition, but in a way to deliberately bend and challenge gender. Men would play woman and woman men (to great effect, for example, in *The Life of Brian* stoning skit).

They did have regular woman actors, such as Carol Cleveland, but found that they could more easily exaggerate the characteristics of the sexes by using cross dressing. Graham Chapman, who was openly gay, was able to bring a unique perspective to these performances as well as a biting satire to much of the humour he injected into the series.

Terry Jones in drag from *The Meaning of Life*





The Philosopher's Song

Everything was not easy sailing, however. Graham Chapman's alcoholism had a negative effect on the team and personality clashes were a regular occurrence. Some believe that Chapman's alcoholism led to John Cleese leaving at the end of the second season. However others have argued that John Cleese himself, while exceptionally creative could be a little "prickly" and "arrogant". I think the truth lies somewhere in-between, both Cleese and Chapman were obviously highly accomplished yet eccentric comedians, so a clash was inevitable.

A unique aspect of their humour was the high intellectual calibre of the work. Ranging from *The Philosopher's Song* to the *Medical Love Song*, they subverted their academic education to create surprisingly funny yet educated skits and songs. The sheer depth of knowledge contained, for example, in *The Philosopher's Song* makes it uniquely entertaining. While anyone can be in on the joke, the more you know about philosophy the more riotous it seems. Graham Chapman's medical knowledge as a physician is clearly obvious in the *Medical Love Song* !

As should also be noted, the Pythons regularly

Always Look on the Bright Side of Life from The Life of Brian



The Undertakers Sketch

used music to great effect. They created a diverse range of comedy songs which combined wit with catchy tunes in such a way that they stood out from the series themselves. Who can forget the climax of *Life of Brian* with Brian hanging on the Cross signing "Always look on the bright side of Life?"

Many of the songs formed the basis for Monty Python albums which sold extremely well, in the end there were some eighteen albums in all. These albums were released before home video and hence made available the Python comedy experience outside the medium of television.

Technically *Monty Python's Flying Circus* went for two seasons with the full team. The third season did not include John Cleese though he and Chapman did write a number of sketches for it. The fourth season was actually only called *Monty Python* and while the first three seasons included thirteen episodes in each, the fourth was cut short and only had six.

Each of the series pushed the limited of censorship. One of the most notorious Python skits, *The Undertakers Sketch*, was at the end of series 2. It shows an undertaker (Chapman) offering a client (Cleese) various alternatives as to how he might wish to dispose of his mother's remains. As the credits roll, members of the audience members are seen to invade the set in a display of disgust. This time the controversy was real and the skit was denounced on news programs throughout the UK. It was censored from future repeats of the series and actually deleted from the BBC archives. It is only seen in the DVD version of the series due to the discovery of its inclusion on US master tapes.

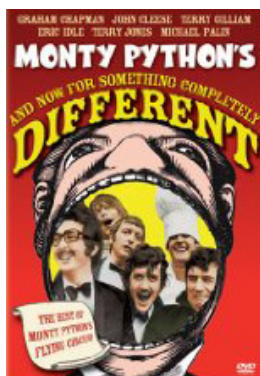
There were a two Monty Python episodes specially made for German television by WDR where it was known as *Monty Python's Fliegender Zirkus*. These were broadcast in 1972 and were produced in Bavaria.

These two episodes are quite sort after as they include a number of skits made only for the German production, these include William Tell, Little Red Riding Hood, and The Merchant of Venice. It was in 1975 that the series were first broadcast in the USA on PBS, first being shown locally in Texas and then being aired countrywide. In Australia the series was run in 1972 on the ABC with some episodes rated PG, others M.

Monty Python Films

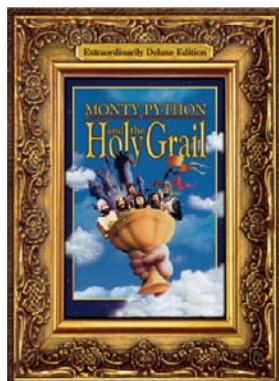
And Now For Something Completely Different (1971)

The first film from Monty Python was essentially a series of popular sketches taken from the first seasons of the series and edited for cinema release. It was financed by Playboy's UK executive Victor Lowndes and included such skits as "Dead Parrot", "The Lumberjack Song", "Upper Class Twit of the Year", "Hell's Grannies", "Self-Defence Class", "How Not To Be Seen" and "Nudge Nudge".



Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975)

Monty Python and the Holy Grail is really the first true Monty Python film. The idea was to move beyond the skits of the series and create a film which could truly stand alone as a comedy feature. It was based loosely on Arthurian legend and was filmed in Scotland. It was directed by Jones and Gilliam with startling animations by Gilliam. Chapman took the lead role with the rest of the



Knights of the Round Table



The Rude French

team playing various roles each. On a low budget they were able to achieve quite a remarkable success with a bizarre and unusual film which has since entered cult cinema history !

The movie opens with Arthur, King of the Britons, looking for knights to sit with him at Camelot. He finds many knights including Sir Galahad the pure, Sir Lancelot the brave, the quiet Sir Bedevere, and Sir Robin the Not-Quite-So-Brave-as-Sir Lancelot. Since this is a Monty Python film, they do not travel on horses, but pretend they do and have their servants bang coconuts to make the sound of horse's hooves. This strange, if not surreal, approach to humour sets the stage for most of the film. We have everything from musical numbers to a killer rabbit (The Rabbit of Caerbannog), Rude Frenchmen (*Your mother was a hamster and your father smelt of elderberries!*), the Knights of Ni and their demands for a shrubbery and political diatribes !

Dennis the Peasant: *Listen. Strange women lying in ponds distributing swords is no basis for a system of government. Supreme executive power derives from a mandate from the masses, not from some farcical aquatic ceremony.*

Arthur: *Be quiet!*

Dennis: *You can't expect to wield supreme power just 'cause some watery tart threw a sword at you!*

The film is also marked by insightful satire on Arthurian legend, English history, the Witch Trials, the Black page and, of course, politics and the Church.

The Knights search for Camelot and after some strange encounters, a nice song and dance, decided it is not really where they want to go. God appears in a cloud (represented by an animation of legendary cricket figure W. G. Grace) and orders them to find the Holy Grail. The search then begins in earnest and is told



The Knights of Ni

through the story of the various journeys of the knights. Each of these tales have their own riotous takes on Arthurian legend. Galahad follows a light to the perils of Castle Anthrax where rather sex deprived young ladies want to be spanked and have oral sex with him ! While Belvedere encounters the dreaded Knights who say Ni and finds he cannot escape unless he provides them a rather nice shrubbery as tribute.

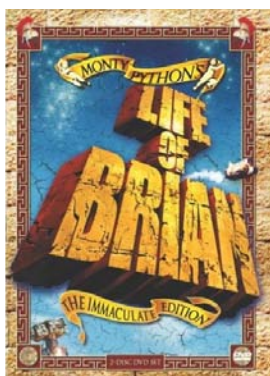
In 2005 Eric Idle used the film as the inspiration for the 2005 Tony Award-winning musical *Spamalot*.

There are various DVD and Blu Ray editions including the latest Extraordinarily Deluxe 3 DVD edition !

Monty Python's Life of Brian (1979)

He's not the Messiah, he's a very naughty boy!

The birth of *Life of Brian* was with a joke. When Eric Idle was asked what they would make next, as a joke he told a reporter the next film would be called "Jesus Christ - Lust for Glory".



Every time a reporter demanded to know the title of their next film this became a rote retort and inside joke between The Pythons. After a while they wondered if they could make a film sending up religious intolerance based around the New Testament story. They were all confirmed sceptics but at the same time has some respect for what Jesus represented as opposed to organized religion. Slowly they began to develop a script in which someone mistaken for the Messiah (named



Graham Chapman as Brian

Brian) could be used as a means to ridicule religious pretension without attacking the person of Jesus. This subtle approach was obviously lost on most religious commentators who attacked the film mercilessly, it probably did not help that Chapman, now a figure well respected in UK Gay rights circles, played Brian ! Financing for the film was impossible to find with major companies pulling out after reading the script and fearing attacks from the Church. In the end George Harrison formed Handmade Films to finance *Monty Python's Life of Brian* and later other English films.

The film is one of the most intelligent of the Python comedies; it displays an encyclopaedic knowledge of Christianity, Gnosticism, first century history and church politics. It is erudite, informed and outrageously funny. It is because it shows such a knowledge of the subject that it works so superbly well. It uses a wide range of comedy forms including wordplay (*Roman's Go Home*), word misunderstandings (*Blessed are the cheesemakers*) to slapstick (the various revolutionary parties fighting in Pilate's Palace)

Sermon on the Mount *Life of Brian* Style !





The controversial Otto from *Monty Python's Life of Brian*

to political commentary (*what have the Roman's given us?*).

Man: I think it was, "Blessed are the cheesemakers"!

Gregory's wife: What's so special about the cheesemakers?

Gregory: Well, obviously it's not meant to be taken literally. It refers to any manufacturers of dairy products.

It was directed by Terry Jones with Gilliam working on the animations, the film was shot in Tunisia with various cameos including George Harrison and Spike Milligan.

The reaction to its release was explosive with immense controversy. As expected religious power brokers condemned it (most without ever seeing it) and protests were held in major cities in the UK, US and Australia. It was banned in many local areas in the UK.

Many scenes were cut from *Life of Brian* due to their controversial nature; most of these have been restored in the Director's Cut. Others are discussed in various commentaries and documentaries but were left on the cutting room floor. These include the Zionist-Terrorist Nazi character Otto which was finally agreed to be so controversial he should be cut out of the film altogether.

This led to quite a heated debate between Gilliam, who wanted the character to stay and others, especially Cleese, who felt it went too far. In *The Pythons Autobiography by The Pythons*, Gilliam said he thought Otto should have stayed, saying *Listen, we've alienated the Christians, let's get the Jews now*. In the final version Otto only appears in the crucifixion scene.

Controversy continued even with the script of the film. Since the UK had blasphemy laws governing what could be published. The script book *The Life of Brian of Nazareth* was refused by various publishers and was the subject of litigation.

There are various DVD editions including a high quality Criterion release (R1) and the Immaculate Edition (Director's Cut) which is also available on Blu Ray.

Monty Python Live at the Hollywood Bowl (1982)

This was really simply an edited version of the Hollywood Bowl performance of the Python team in Los Angeles.



It included the live concert, some footage from the rare German Flying Circus episodes and several songs from the *Contractual Obligation* album.

Monty Python's The Meaning of Life (1983)

Hospital Administrator: And what are you doing this morning?

Obstetrician: It's a birth.

Hospital Administrator: Ah. And what sort of thing is that?

Dr. Spenser: Well, that's where we take a new baby out of a lady's tummy.

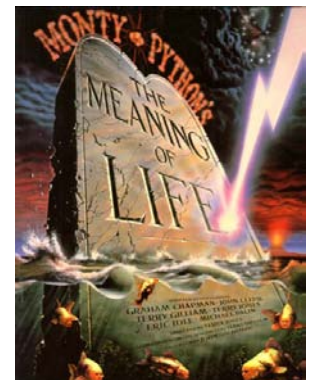
Hospital Administrator: Wonderful what we can do nowadays.

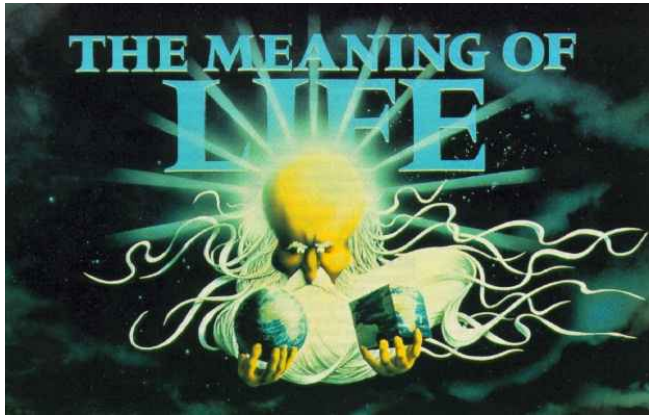
The *Meaning of Life* film was created to combine both a complete comedy film with sketch and skit comedy.

While it has an overarching comedic plot, the various stages of life from birth to death, each stage is illustrated with various sketches, musical numbers and cinematic explorations.

This is considered one of the Python's more perverse films which revelled in violence, sex and black humour.

The film opens with what seems to be an unrelated short, the





story of The Crimson Permanent Assurance Company. Originally produced as a sequence within the film, Gilliam's direction took it so out of control that it was placed at the start of the film as a separate story.

Each of the segments of the film take a dark look at various stages of life. These range from lighter comedy, such as "every sperm is sacred" in the birth segment, to extremely violent episodes such as an operation to remove a liver without anaesthetic and the hugely obese Mr. Creosote exploding after eating himself to death.

There are scenes of breathtaking politically incorrectness such as in the Autumn years when a cleaner's only claim to fame is that he "didn't work for Jews" and others of which are rather perceptive, including examinations of war (Part III: Fighting Each Other) and death (Part VII).

Of course when pushed to reveal the meaning of life the team attacks the state of the movie industry and reveals that the truth of life is really very simple.

Mr. Creosote in *The Meaning of Life*



The Grim Reaper collects souls after death by Salmon Mousse

Try and be nice to people, avoid eating fat, read a good book every now and then, get some walking in, and try and live together in peace and harmony with people of all creeds and nations.

Again *Meaning of Life* courted controversy; it was banned in many countries and only with the Director's Cut were deleted scenes restored to the film.

While they sometimes worked together in the Secret Policeman's Ball benefit shows for Amnesty, they did not produce any further shows together until *The Parrot Sketch Not Included - 20 Years of Monty Python special*. Sadly, not long after in 1989 Graham Chapman died and any thought of a reunited Monty Python product faded from view. The rest of the team gave him a truly raucous send-off.

Each of the team went on to have successful individual careers, each taking with them the unique experience of Monty Python. In 2009 we can look back at Monty Python as a truly unique comedy experience. A group of truly eccentric comedians revolutionized comedy and gave us what is still today one of the most incredible collections of film, TV episodes, songs and albums in the history of British, if not world, comedy.

Watching *Monty Python's Flying Circus* or any of the films today still brings down the house, causing raucous laughter and uncontrollable mirth.

The Pythons have stood the test of time and continue to be some of the most significant comedians of the twentieth century.

The Aunty Jack Show

"...Goodbye, me little lovelies! And don't forget to tune in next week to the show, because if you don't, I'm going to come round to your house, and I'm going to rip your bloody arms off. And I will too. Don't forget it."

It would be fair to say that Australian comedy was changed forever the night that Aunty Jack roared into Australian living rooms on her Harley-Davidson. The Seventies were a period of great social and political change in Australia. The Labor government of Gough Whitlam was elected on the slogan 'It's Time' after 23 years of conservative government and began to radically change economical and political structures. Censorship laws were relaxed and all sorts of social issues from women's rights to gay liberation were being discussed.

Some years before Monty Python was broadcast in Australia, the Aunty Jack Show brought strange and surreal comedy to a shocked and dismayed Australian audience. It was produced by and broadcast on ABC-TV and ran from 1972-1973, achieving instant cult status and even winning a Logie.



As Grahame Bond fondly remembers, when they received the Logie for Aunty Jack presented to them by Gina Lollobrigida. *"We took the total piss out of receiving the award"*.

The lead character is one of the most unique comedic personas in the history of television comedy programs. She is a hugely obese (*"big, round and fat"* as the song goes), gravel-voiced drag queen with a large moustache. She wears a large blue 19th century design velvet dress, football socks and a large golden boxing glove on her right hand. She rides on a Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

Aunty Jack has a uniquely Australian mode of speech, mixing camp innuendo with outrageous threats and over the top dialog. She refers to everyone as *"me little lovelies"* and if she becomes annoyed threatens - *"I'll rip yer bloody arms off!"*

Aunty Jack was played by the highly talented Grahame Bond. While pursuing a career in architecture at Sydney University, Bond had already become an accomplished writer, producer, comedian, singer, songwriter and guitarist. He was a founding member of the University's Architecture Revues from 1964-69. It was here that Grahame met his longtime musical, writing and acting partner Rory O'Donoghue.

After graduating, Grahame and associates continued working together on a wide range of projects in film, television, radio and theatre. He collaborated on several short films and stage pieces with Peter Weir, and wrote and played in a number of stage comedies and revues including *Balloon Dubloon* (1969), *Drip Dry Dreams* at the Adelaide Festival and Richbrooke, Filth at the Phillip St. Revue and Hamlet

on Ice at the Nimrod Theatre (1970). His friendship with Weir led him to write the music for the three-part AFI Award-winning 1970 film *Three To Go*.

Grahame's first documented television appearance was *Man on a Green Bike* which screened on ABC-TV at the end of December 1969. The 50-minute film was co-written by and starred Bond, Peter Weir, with Geoff Malone, James Dellit, and Anna Nygh. The story concerns:

"...three men, who were once friends sharing many adventures, are now mayors of three cities -- medieval Ackley, the futuristic Cadmium, and Petal Lake, a community reminiscent of the 1930s. Into their midst comes the strange figure of Mr. Maloon, a man travelling on a heavily laden green bike. His presence disturbs and embarrasses the mayors."

According to Grahame Bond, Aunty Jack was inspired by an overbearing uncle, his grandfather Ben Doyle, and Dot Strong the ABC's last official tea lady. It was originally planned that Aunty Jack would star in an ABC children's radio series called *"The Aunty Jack Show"* in 1969. It was intended to replace the long-running children's radio series *The Argonauts*, which was to be cancelled. However when the ABC executives first saw the drafts of the program they were shocked by the nature of the Aunty Jack character and did not believe either her character nor her songs were suitable for children's programming.

Aunty Jack made her debut on Television in Aunty Jack's Travelling Show. It was shown as an episode of ABC-TV's *The Comedy Game*, broadcast in late 1971. It was originally to be called *"Aunty Jack's Travelling Abattoirs"* but this did not go down well with ABC executives. Neither did a lot of the content of the show, which from the very first episode was controversial and the subject of many complaints.

It is hard to actually decode the comedic influences on Aunty Jack. At the time it went to air *Monty Python's Flying Circus*



The Aunty Jack Team (Season 1)

had not been shown in Australia but it had certainly been seen by some of the team. Aunty Jack also seems to have taken some inspiration from the *Goon Show* and early British comedy. Bond himself cites Australian radio star Jack Davey, the Mickey Mouse Club and *The Steve Allen Show* as early interests, as well as the surreal yet confronting humour of Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22*.

Somehow the ABC was convinced to run a short series after the *Travelling Show*. It was a weekly show and premiered on 16 November 1972. Needless to say it shocked the staid ABC audience. There were a large number of complaints about the transvestitism of Aunty Jack, the use of the word bloody and the violence. Amusingly, the Wollongong council thought the region was being ridiculed and called for the series to be banned. Teenagers loved it and it became an instant cult success.

After an avalanche of complaints there was much debate at the ABC about cancelling the series. However, somehow it made it through two series shown in 1972 and 1973 respectively. The first series was comprised of seven episodes, the second of six episodes.





Aunty Jack Sings Wollongong

Each episode was focused on a specific theme. In Series One these were Radio, War, Kulture, Horror, Anonymous, Family and Sex. In Series Two, The Channel Nine Show, The Iron Maiden Show, The Golden Glove Show, The Ear Nose and Throat Show, The Little Lovelies Show and The R Certificate Show. There were regular debates about content. Grahame Bond ended the series with Aunty Jack having a heart attack in shock over the rude content of the R Certificate Show.

The Aunty Jack team was comprised of a tight group of main characters. Aunty Jack, super-heroine Flange Desire, Thin Arthur with his striped leotards and Narrator Neville. There are also a diverse range of semi-regular characters such as Errol and Neil (the singing tramps), Kid Eager and Kev Kavanagh (the meat specialist).

An amazing side development was the character of Norman Gunston. Garry McDonald started in Series 2 as Aunty Jack's new sidekick. However, in one episode a new character was de-

veloped by staff writer Wendy Heather and this became who we now know as Norman Gunston. This character was further developed in Wollongong the Brave and the *Aunty Jack Sings Wollongong Album* and then spun off into *The Norman Gunston Show*.

The album *Aunty Jack Sings Wollongong* was released in 1974. The single and theme song from the series Farewell Aunty Jack reached Number 1 and stayed in the Australian music charts for 22 weeks. It was also unusual in that it was the first "picture disc" ever released worldwide. One of the notable elements of the Aunty Jack Show was its ongoing use of witty songs and musical numbers. Both Grahame Bond and Rory O'Donoghue were talented musicians and hence this gave the show a musical touch not found in many other comedy programs.

Around the same time the travelling show went around Australia and its success was outstanding with most concerts being sold out and even having a shot at the Opera House. Aunty Jack had come a long way.

*Farewell, Aunty Jack
We know you'll be back
Though you're ten feet tall you don't scare us at all
You're big, bold and tough
But you're not so rough
There's a scream as you plummet away*

Aunty Jack: *Goodbye, me little lovelies!
And don't forget to tune in next week to the show,
because if you don't, I'm going to come round to your house,
and I'm going to rip your bloody arms off.
And I will too. Don't forget it.*

*She rides a black bike
Aunty Jack: I do.*

*And drives through the night
She's big, round and fat but don't dare tell her that
Aunty Jack: I bloody well aren't!*

*Else she'll turn so mean
Her glove starts to gleam
There's a scream as she plummets away*

Aunty Jack: *Do you want a good smack in the mouth?*





Norman Gunston

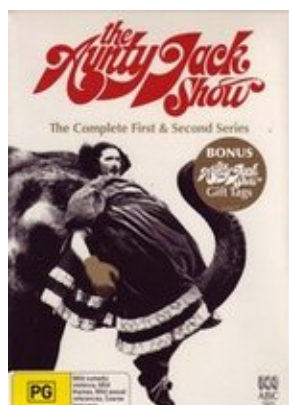
*Oh farewell, Auntie Jack
Don't you know you'll be back
Though you're ten feet tall you don't scare us at all*

*You're big, bold and tough
But you're not so rough
There's a scream as you plummet away*

The Auntie Jack team introduced colour television to Australia on Friday 28 February 1975. In typically anarchic fashion they began their introduction 2-3 minutes before the actual start time of 12pm, deliberately giving the finger to the commercial channels. They also produced four comedy specials screened in 1974 under the title of *Wollongong the Brave* (1974). These included "Norman Gunston: The Golden Weeks" which spun off the Norman Gunston series in 1975.

The team's final television collaboration was the comedy series *The Off Show* in 1976. It was even more outrageous that Auntie Jack and was cancelled after only a few episodes.

The crisis unfolded following a controversial incident in which an ABC executive not only demanded the removal of a skit called *Leave It To Jesus* (a parody of the famous American series "Leave It to Beaver" which also starred Herod, the wonder dog) but erased it from the master tapes of the episode the night before it was to go to air.



In 1977 Grahame Bond as Auntie Jack also appeared on British television in the *Not the Auntie Jack Show* on LWT.

The series hadn't been repeated since the 1970s, apart from a "Best of" show in the early 1990s and for many years it was believed that the master tapes of *The Auntie Jack Show* had been destroyed. However, this proved to be untrue and while they took some restoration, they finally made it to DVD.



The restoration and DVD release of *The Auntie Jack Show* was a project of the ABC, Maurice Murphy, Grahame Bond and a team at the National Archives of Australia (NAA) with the various titles being released on ABC DVD via Roadshow Entertainment. Each season was released separately, then as a complete set. *Wollongong the Brave* is a separate release.

The original series was in black and white, but some segments were also filmed in colour to be shown at the Montreux Film Festival. The colour sequences are included as extras on this disc.

Auntie Jack returned in early 2006 in a live stage show titled the Auntie Jack Show and Tell starring Grahame Bond and Rory O'Donoghue.



As well as Auntie Jack and Thin Arthur, the show featured the singing tramps Neil and Errol, Country and Eastern music exponents the Farrelly Brothers, the Ri Fol Tit Men and bodgie butcher and meat artist Kev Kavanagh.

Auntie Jack Show and Tell
Web: <http://www.auntiejack.org>

Bullets, Bombs & Babes

The Malibu Bay Films of Andy Sidaris

In earlier years, did you watch TV shows like Charlie's Angels and Miami Vice? Did you like the action, the Beautiful People and the exotic locations? If so, you're going to love Andy Sidaris. His style of film is similar to these TV shows but taken to a level that you would never see on TV. Synergy would not usually review this sort of film because it would seem at first to be a little mainstream, but watch one of the films and you will see that it definitely isn't a mainstream genre.

Mr Sidaris does not believe in political correctness. All the women are young(ish), attractive, and extremely well developed in a way that would send the feminists wildly shouting "Exploitation!" to any TV executive. Clothing is kept to a minimum and various degrees of nudity, full frontal and simulated sex scenes are common.

The films have no pretensions to being great cinema. The plots are just a carrier for the action and the women. What they are, also, is beautifully filmed, very professionally produced by Arlene Sidaris and directed by Andy Sidaris, and really great examples of high-class B-grade



action films. It's unusual because Sidaris got his training with ABC Sports in the U.S., including the Olympics – it looks like he simply went over to doing what he loved instead.

The locations are concentrated on Hawaii and Las Vegas. Mr Sidaris takes full advantage of the magnificent scenery (that's the mountains and stuff, not the girls) to produce films with a lush, big-budget look. Aerial shots are common. The population mix of Hawaii is also used to advantage with actors of Chinese and Japanese origin featuring often.

A Sidaris plot will feature a lot of action, a higher level of violence and far more explosions than you will see on a TV show.

The plotlines revolve around two ladies who are

Sidaris and his girls



Bob Estreich



“agents” for “The Agency”, under cover as air freight pilots on the island of Molokai in the Hawaii group. Why Molokai in particular is unexplained but it seems to have a high proportion of baddies. The girls are not, thankfully, played as bimbos – well, not too often. They will become involved in a plot to smuggle guns or drugs or to kill someone.

Solving the case will usually involve flying to Las Vegas for some reason. They will meet other agents, remove what clothing they are almost wearing, and sometimes parade around striking dramatic poses with guns. Some of the plots are as thin as the clothing, but really, who cares?

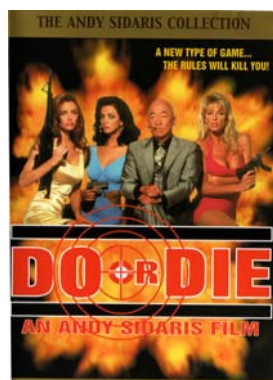
There is a regular stable of actors and actresses including Erik Estrada (did you ever wonder what happened to him after CHiPS? Now you know, although the confused Mr Estrada appears as both a goodie and an evil but unconvincing villain in the various films).

The two heroines are played by ex-Playmates Dona Speir and Roberta Vasquez, both favorites of mine back in those days. They still look good and they can act tough as well.

Sidaris' Malibu Bay Films turned out quite a few of these films in the eighties and nineties. Let's have a look at some typical ones.

Do Or Die 1991

The girls and the Agency have upset the plans of international crime boss Kane (played well by Pat Morita) once too often. He has the girls targeted for death, but in a sportsmanlike gesture he tells them about it first.



Six teams of assassins will be sent after them. They must kill or be killed but only after a last sex romp with other agents who will try to protect them using high tech weaponry and very little common sense.

The locations change every five minutes (as does the girls' clothing). There are some nice comedy notes injected into the film, such as when the head of the Agency shoots a duck instead of a baddie.

The action scenes in the Everglades feature boat chases, a remote control helicopter, the compulsory motorbike chase and the old exploding baseball trick. I believe Mr Sidaris may have been somewhat influenced by that British guy, James what's-his-name, but James never had sidekicks who looked this good in brief swimwear. Mr Sidaris seems to enjoy spoofing the British agent and he does it well.

Savage Beach 1989

I thought this was one of Sidaris' better films. During WW2 the Japanese took a load of gold from the Philippines Treasury and put it on a boat to Japan.



The boat was lost during a storm but now a group of baddies think they know where the boat sank and are out to recover the gold. So is the U.S. Navy. By coincidence the girls have been forced to crash land on the island when their plane's engine is knocked out by a lightning strike. None of them know that the island is inhabited by a lone Japanese soldier with a sense of honour.



Sidaris and Julie Strain

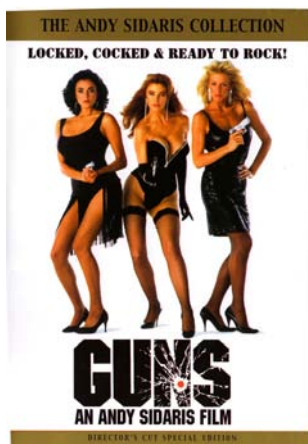
The girls spend a surprising amount of time fully dressed in this film. They do not, however, feel the need to fly to Las Vegas. The plot is a little more intelligent than most. The girls must contend with baddies, no radio, no swimwear, and blatant continuity errors.

Guns 1990

This film really makes the most of the beautiful Hawaiian coastal scenery.

This time Erik Estrada plays the baddie who is smuggling Chinese assault rifles to his organisation in South America. The girls, of course, get in the way. They foil his evil plot by frequent changes of clothing, striking poses with different weapons, and, of course, flying to Las Vegas.

The film seems to have a higher explosion count than other Sidaris films so turn up the volume. It also has an important new ingredient, transvestite hitmen !



Can Estrada's 9mm pistol with laser sights beat Dona's rocket launcher? Of course it cant.

Many Sidaris films have now been rereleased in The Andy Sidaris Collection. The quality is magnificent and they are worth buying to bring back those wonderful days before political correctness.

The films in the set are

Malibu Express 1985
Hard Ticket To Hawaii 1987
Picasso Trigger 1988
Savage Beach 1989
Guns 1990
Enemy Gold 1993
Do Or Die 1991
Hard Hunted 1992
Fit To Kill 1993
The Dallas Connection 1994
Day Of The Warrior 1996
L.E.T.H.A.L. Ladies:
Return To Savage Beach 1998

Sidaris has produced or directed many more films than these, including sports documentaries, but there are two films that particularly interest me. He is credited with producing in 1995 two episodes of a TV show, Joe Bob's Drive-in Theatre, which are titled *More Girls With Big Guns* and *Still More Girls With Big Guns*. Can he be the producer of the long-lost legendary art film *Sexy Girls With Big Guns?* (aka *Big Girls With Big Guns*). This wonderful film featured a series of bikini-clad young ladies explaining why they needed an AK47 assault rifle or similar for personal protection, then firing same to the great danger of the film crew. It sounds a lot like Sidaris' *Malibu Bay* films.

We have a lot to thank Andy Sidaris for.

Web: <http://www.andysidaris.com/>

BOOKS & COMIX

**The Alien Invasion Survival Handbook:
A Defense Manual for the
Coming Extraterrestrial
Apocalypse**
W. H. Mumfrey
How Books 2009

"The nations of the earth must someday make a common front against attack by people from other planets"

Gen. Douglas MacArthur, 1955

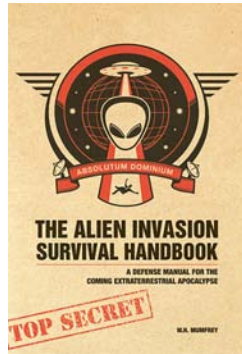
The *Alien Invasion Survival Handbook* was written to prepare you for the battle of your life. A battle with an adversary so ruthlessly cunning that he largely stays off the front pages of your newspapers and media broadcasts. Despite wreaking havoc in the lives of countless people around the globe, his name is not on the lips of those you pass in the street. His insidious work goes on night after night, plucking hapless sleepers from their beds and whisking unwary travellers into the night sky.

Forever vigilant, always elusive. We speak, of course, of aliens, the extraterrestrial scourge that has mercilessly tormented humanity for generations.

Whether you have yet to have an alien encounter or have been the victim of repeated abductions, the book promises to provide you with practical, hands-on solutions to the ever-present alien threat.

Don't wait until you feel their gangly fingers round your throat. You owe it to yourself, your family and humanity to prepare for the inevitable intergalactic showdown.

The Alien Invasion Survival Handbook: A Defense Manual for the Coming Extraterrestrial Apocalypse is presented as a highly illustrated government manual from the 1950's or 60's. At times it feels like you are reading one of those strange government "How to survive a nuclear attack" booklets but this one focuses on the very present menace of alien abduction.



The book itself is divided into Know Your Enemy, Defense, Escape, Attack and Invasion with appendices on the History of the Resistance, References and Resources and an Alien Encounter Log Book – very practical stuff.

There are also rip roaring funny sub- chapter headings such as "Protection from Alien Paralysis", "Commandeering and Piloting an Alien Spacecraft", "Locating and Removing Alien Implants" and very practical advice on dealing with an alien attack. We also learn everything about aliens from their various organs and physical abilities to their sexual habits.

It is illustrated with some of the funniest UFO cartoons I have seen in a long time as well as photos, excerpts from "UFO manuals" and more.

It examines why the aliens would come here in the first place (Resources, Resettlement or looking for a Food Source) and how to detect an alien intrusion from the weeks leading up to attack right until the last 5 minutes.

It explains in graphic detail what you can do to protect yourself from hand to hand combat to alien traps, it even includes music to block alien mind control - Jimi Hendrix and AC/DC are high on the list !

Ever wonder where you can hit an alien to achieve maximum damage ? Practicing on an



eggplant will give you the right feel if you need to squeeze an alien's neck. But it can take 20 minutes so be ready to take your time ! They are also "alien-traps" you can use to demobilize them, but you must be prepared.

This is a superbly published, well presented and incredibly amusing guide to the Alien Invasion. It is not cheaply published, indeed includes an alien embossed on the cover and three colour (black, white and red) printing inside.

The cartoons, photos and fact files are nicely reproduced (as well as being very funny) and the way in which the whole book is presented like a government "self defense" manual is marvellous.

I loved this book and laughed from beginning to end...at least until the alien came in my window with a large probe in hand...

Web: <http://www.fwbookstore.com>

**Bad Mags
Volume 2
Tom Brinkmann
Headpress 2009**

"Hippie Witness Confesses... Sharon Tate Gave Manson An Hour of Love For Drugs" touts the cover with a photo of Sharon Tate superimposed next to Manson, made to look as if they are in the same photograph".....

Bad Mags is the result of a terrible obsession, Tom Brinkmann loves bad mags. Not just your average naughty magazines, but the strangest, sleaziest, weirdest and most bizarre periodicals ever published.

His obsession has led to an astounding website and the release of *Bad Mags* (Volume 1) which introduced us to the world of these outré publications. It sold extremely well, indeed reaching over the 10,000 copies mark in the US alone.

Bad Mags, however, is really quite a ground breaking series, it is not only a fascinating read for those interested in unusual sub cultures and peculiar literature but documents history from another perspective. You see popular obsessions, discourses which have been swept under the carpet and cultures you never knew existed.

It offers provides an excellent guide for collectors, buyers and sellers. You buy another magazine on Ebay without checking these books first !

Volume two takes us further into the underbelly of publishing, covering some quite outrageous counter culture territory from hippies to outlaw bikers, Satanists to punks !

There are also special focus chapters on Sharon Tate and Charles Manson. There is also a short story and magazines by Ed Wood and a article by Frank Leonard reminiscing about working at Pendulum.



"In the March 1976 (v8 #4) issue of Nymphet, a newsstand girlie mag, in a letter to "The Nymph's Box," i.e., the editor, titled, "Satanic Sex" that was illustrated with a picture of LaVey with a nude woman, a reader wrote the following:

"I've been a fan of skin mags for a long time, now and one of the things that bugs me in particular, is the absence of the occult from sexually oriented material. For a brief spurt about three or four years ago, voodoo, Satanism and the occult were getting a fair amount of play in magazines similar to your own. Now, however, there's little—if anything, appearing on this shadier side of human sexuality.

"I find extremely arousing, the rituals and ceremonies involving the symbols of witchcraft and devil worship—especially the idea of sacrificing



a virgin and the actual deflowering of the virgin by the Evil One himself. One of the most exciting aspects of that brief period was the popularity of Anton La Vea [sic], occult leader of the 5000-member Satanic Church in San Francisco, California. I thought he was very colorful and the sensual practice of nudity among his worshippers, stimulating indeed.

"Other than this, I really have no complaints about your magazine. But I would like to see more kinky types of sex handled visually, as well as in the articles—subjects like necrophilia and bestiality."

The letter was signed, "J. L. Jackson, Atlanta, Georgia."

This is a visually compelling book overflowing with rare photos, hundreds and hundreds of magazine cover reproductions and lots of truly mind bending extracts. Along the way you learn about the creators, publishers and writers of this strange underworld of Bad Mags.

You can enter Tom's world, if you dare, at <http://badmags.com/>

Headpress

Web: <http://www.headpress.com>

Cinema Sewer Two

Edited by Robin Bougie

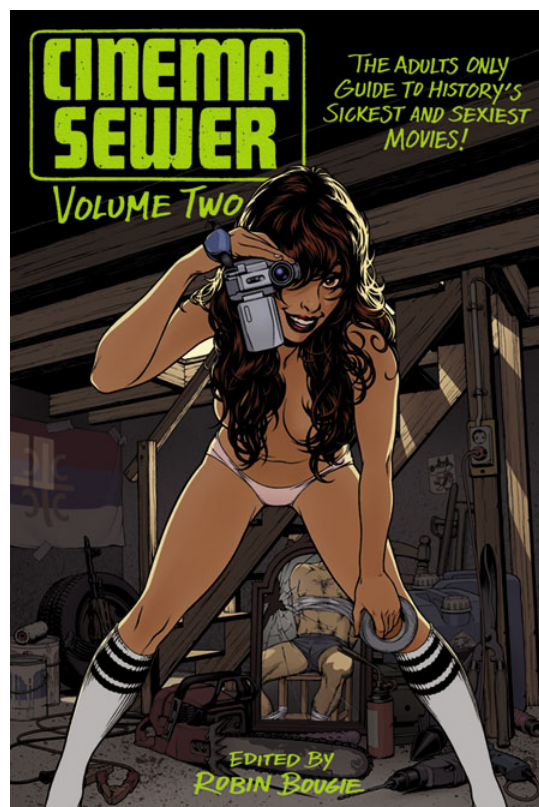
FAB Press 2009

Web: <http://www.fabpress.com>

Cinema Sewer is one of my favourite zines. Handwritten and illustrated, filled to the brim with extreme content—adult films, cult and horror, sleaze and lots more. It takes the depravity of underground film to an art form.

The first compilation in book form was published in 2007 and brought together early issues of *Cinema Sewer*, while Volume Two takes us even further into illicit territory. It covers issues 13-16 of this mind blowing publication. Revised, expanded and presented with an additional 90 pages of content.

It is difficult to describe the experience of *Cinema Sewer* to the "uninitiated"; the whole magazine is a work of art; being presented in handwritten form with comics, cartoons, movie covers and lots more. The content borders from the extremes of adult film, lovingly illustrated with perverse cartoons, to horror and cult classics and rants about everything in-between.



It reminds me of the very early dates of underground comics and magazines, every page is packed to the edges with rants, reviews, commentary, cartoons, movie posters and memorabilia.

From *The Killing of America*, the ultra-violent "shockumentary" to Bongwater Butt Babes, a title on which I do not need to comment! From interviews with such figures as Lee Carroll, the porn star and David Hess to reflections on XXX comics.

From the twenty five best movies adapted from a comic book to a retrospective on Dorothy Le-May. From *Mommy Put Me in Porn*, the story of Athena Star to zillions of movie reviews of titles you will never have heard of and when you see them, will never want to hear of them again.

This is a book which is guaranteed to bring a grin to the face of any devoted Cinemaphile.

Cinema Sewer will shock, arouse, titillate and offend. If you are easily disturbed by the discussion and depiction of all manner of bodily functions, then don't bother. But if you want to explore the wildest, sickest and sexiest films in genre cinema history in the most amusing format possible then *Cinema Sewer II* is for you.

If you want to get *Cinema Sewer* issue by issue visit <http://www.cinemasewer.com/>

Commando
D-Day – Fight or Die
Allen & Unwin 2009

Reviewer:
Bob Estreich

“..a story of fighting men struggling against the odds to win out in the end.”

Commando war comics have been around now for nearly fifty years since 1961 and are still being issued at the rate of eight a month. They are pocket size – 7 X 5 1/2 inches – and around 68 pages. I remember them well from my youth when they and their many counterparts formed a part of my early reading. They were previously known as *Commando War Stories in Pictures*.

They were a good read. The stories were rather simplistic and dealt with stories of heroism, mateship, a certain amount of patriotism, and all the appropriate Boys Own themes. The drawings were high quality black and white, with colour being confined to the covers.

They were also generally technically accurate although this particular edition does show some errors like a Bren gun ejecting shells from the top. Unlike many suitable kids' stories, people actually died. (“Aaaarrrrggghhhh”). In the mad librarians' purge of the 1970s (?) they survived, unlike Biggles or Noddy, so they must have been seen to have some literary merit.

There were the usual stereotyped nationalities – the British were heroic in the face of adversity, the Germans were usually evil and said “Schweinhund” and “Gott in Himmel” a lot, the French were generally brave but low key, and occasionally the Canadians and Americans were acknowledged for helping Britain save Europe. Each story was completely self-contained and very few stories reused the same character. This comic set contains twelve of the best D-Day stories. Many of the stories do not involve commando actions, as they gradually lost touch with the series title over the years.



They range from the first beach landings to American paratroop landings further inland to the conflicts of older soldiers leading kids into battle. The stories are plausible if not historically accurate and the quality of the drawing is consistently high, as we came to expect from the series.

I looked on the Internet and these comics in their original form are now very collectible. They are also quite inexpensive, at around a couple of dollars each. Surprisingly, after all these years, I still found the comic to be a good read. It's over forty years since I last read one, but the old feeling of pleasure from a good story returned.

The Compleat Motherfucker
A History of the Mother of All Dirty Words
Jim Dawson
Feral House 2009

A boy's best friend is his Mother
Norman Bates in Psycho

The F Word by Jesse Sheidlower published by Random House offered us a fascinating look at the word Fuck in its many variations. While the word Fuck has become accepted, even celebrated in, TV and cinema, the word Motherfucker is still an edgier, more taboo sort of term.

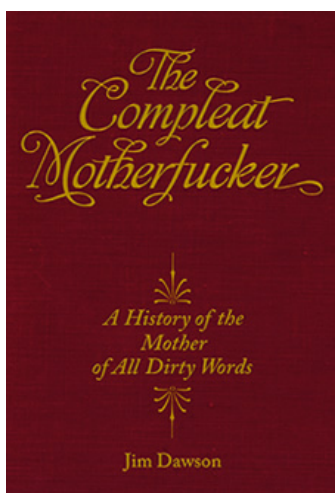
Motherfucker is made up of two separate Anglo-Saxon words — one considered sacred, one generally considered profane — locked together by constant usage. The term began as a common insult, “Mother fucker,” to denigrate a son by insulting his mother. The U.S. Supreme Court (Keefe v. Geanakos, 1969) called it “a vulgar term for an incestuous son” that is “admittedly highly offensive.”

Motherfucker once had the power of an incantation that could set mild-mannered men into fits of homicidal fury. Even today, many Americans believe it's a linguistic toxin that poisons the air when breathed aloud. While they will tolerate all sorts of profanities this one seems beyond the pale. But others look upon it as a neutral or even positive term, it has become a term of choice in certain communities and comedians love it for its polarizing effect.

The Compleat Motherfucker is a fascinating journey into all aspects of the term, from the biological and psychoanalysis (the taboos against incest), the linguistic, historical and sociological.

There are discussions of its use in literature, music and comedy as well as a comprehensive discussion of its use within film, with lots of scene descriptions and examples.

Dawson also hones in on specific comedians such as Lenny Bruce, George Carlin and Eddie Murphy to offer us an in-depth examination of its power when used creatively in stand up comedy.



Your mamma's on the top of my things-to-do-list
Yo Mama
Butterfingers
Australian rap Group 2004

Dawson also explores the use of the term as both an insult and as humour, its use within various segments of the African American communities and its linguistic modification into such terms as MILF (mothers I would like to fuck).

You know the seven, don't you ?
That you can't say on television?

Shit, Piss, Fuck, Cunt, Cocksucker,
Motherfucker, and Tits!
George Carlin

The section on Hollywood offers an excellent history of censorship and the battles that have continued to this day over not just over the word motherfucker but over what is considered obscene language in general.

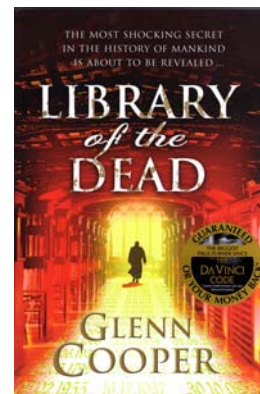
His historical coverage is comprehensive going through literature, music and film and right back into the fifties and beyond. Many believe the first reference to the term Mother Fucker is right back in 1890 !

The Compleat Motherfucker is packed with fascinating references, quotes and amusing historical episodes. It documents everything from computer games with modified Motherfucker references to books, magazines, movies and more.

It is the ultimate reference on a forbidden word.

Library of the Dead
Glenn Cooper
Arrow Books
Random House 2009

People are being killed in New York, ordinary people with no apparent connection to each other. The only thread that connects them is that just before their murder each has received a postcard with a crudely drawn coffin on it. Since it appears a new serial killer may be on the loose, the FBI is called in. Reluctantly they assign the case to Will Piper, a drunken womanising agent who is just barely hanging onto his job until retirement. He is the logical choice since, despite his personal problems, he is still the FBI's best profiler. Even Will is finding it hard to get more than a very basic profile on the killer. Or is he a killer? Killers usually stick to the same modus operandi and each killing that Will investigates seems to have nothing in common with previous ones. Finding a link will require some brilliant detective work and insights.



In a series of flashbacks we also follow a group of medieval monks in an abbey off the coast of Britain. They have discovered a terrible secret, but they don't know what they have – is it a gift from God or a curse.

The stories of Will Piper and the monks will intertwine, and Will himself will have to examine his past critically. As he gets closer to the truth, it seems someone else, someone powerful, is watching him, and his own life may be in danger.

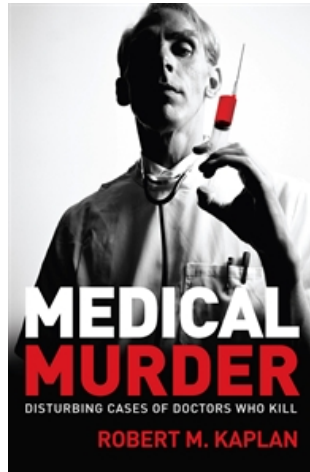
This is the first novel by Glenn Cooper. He is also a screenwriter and producer, and has had some success with his early works. Screenwriting is not the same as novel writing and there are some rough edges in his characterisations, but he has constructed a gripping suspense story that keeps changing direction. Like the film *Knowing*, also reviewed in this issue, he questions whether our lives are truly random or predetermined by some greater force. What would happen if someone tapped that force? The plot elements are doled out sparingly, ensuring that the mystery remains right up to the final pages. The story falls into place eventually but it is not the story you expect.

Medical Murder
Dr. Robert M Kaplan
Allen and Unwin 2009

To heal or harm - the clinical God complexes, egos and psychopaths that have brought horror to healthcare

January, 2000. World-wide headlines announce that Dr Harold Shipman, an English General Practitioner, had been found guilty of murdering several hundred of his patients, making him one of history, and medicine's, most extreme serial killers ... but certainly not the first or last. He died without every revealing his motivations or the extent of his crimes.

Doctors are the new priesthood, they are the ones to whom we turn in periods of trouble, the ones we trust with our most personal details and the ones to whom we allow access to the most intimate recesses of our bodies. They are the standard by which many court cases rise or fall, they have the power to give us time off work, decide the success of a damages case and when we are at death's door, make decisions



Michael Swango (Media Credit: Alex Grundy)

which can either save or kill us.

All doctors take the Hippocratic Oath which is based on the simple dictum of 'first do no harm', so what drives a doctor to cross that line to murder? There is no simple answer. There are many forms of killing, from negligence to arrogance, from political to financial. While some of the worst cases seem to involve a God complex, where the doctor gains personal satisfaction even excitement from having the power over life and death and being able to use it.

In some many cases these doctors are able to get away with killing many hundreds of patients as nobody suspects the good natured, kind, bespectacled doctor who has lived in the neighborhood for years and helps elderly patients of being a cold killer even a vicious mass murderer. Yet that is exactly the scenario of Dr. Harold Shipman.

There are many other motives. There was Dr Harry Bailey, the Sydney psychiatrist who between 1962 and 1979 at the Chelmsford Clinic dispatched numerous patients with the discredited Deep Sleep Therapy just because he would not accept his therapy did not work. He committed suicide believing himself martyred because of his unique approach to psychiatry.

Then there is Dr Radovan Karadzic, the psychiatrist who led the genocide during the Bosnian War, whose medical ethics were totally disconnected from his political ambitions. There was Dr William Palmer who poisoned his victims for plain old money, and the recent chilling case of Michael Swango who killed his patients



Dr. Harold Shipman: The most prolific serial killer of all time..

and colleagues just for the thrill of it. Far from being unique exceptions it emerges that medical murder, or clinicide, has a long history in the profession.

Forensic psychiatrist Dr Robert M Kaplan has made an extensive study of doctors who kill. *Medical Murder* goes beneath the scrubs, behind the operating theatre doors and into the minds of medical history's most notorious and infamous characters.

Kaplan unearths their twisted motivations and grapples with the chilling paradox of why these healers' spend years learning the techniques of preserving and saving life only to use their position and skills to tear it away.



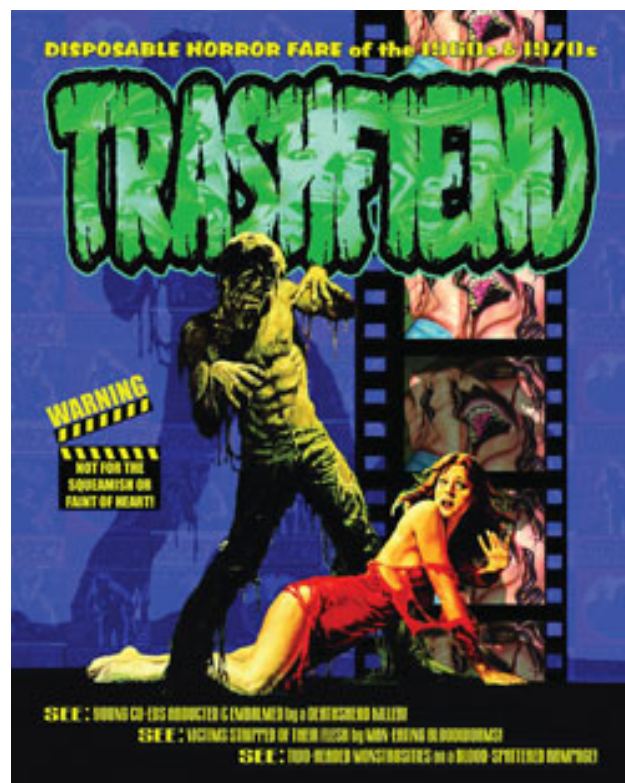
Trashfiend
Scott Stine
Headpress 2009

Disposable Horror Fare of the 1960s and 1970s

Trashfiend was a magazine devoted to "Horror and Exploitation Fare from the 1960s & 1970s." Its focus was on low-rent horror fare and monster and horror memorabilia from the two decades with which creator Scott Aaron Stine was (and still is) obsessed. Since there is only so much you can fit into a small format forty eight page magazine now the *Trashfiend* book series can explore Stine's obsessions in greater detail, thrilling us with new discoveries and bizarre content.

Scott Stine picks up where his legendary magazine left off for a fun, energetic and critical look at this beloved genre. You will be surprised with his knowledge as he is considered a world-renowned film geek celebrated for his encyclopedic knowledge of the genre.

Trashfiend combines in-depth articles and superb research with its trademark humor and love for bad and sleazy media. Packed with reviews, trivia, interviews, anecdotes and rare illustrations, and written with witty and insightful flair, *Trashfield* the book will fascinate cult cin-



ema obsessives, nostalgists, collectors and horror lovers of every stripe.

Included are interviews with John Stanley, an ex-horror host who also directed *Nightmare in Blood* and authored *The Creature Features Movie Guide*; Richard Cardella, star and co-writer of *The Crater Lake Monster*, Bruce Jones, comic artist and writer who has received accolades for his work on *The Incredible Hulk* and Cal Bolder, star of *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* and the Horror Westerns of William Beaudine.

Just some of the topics covered include blaxploitation movies, Marvel monster magazines, trading cards, Horror Digest magazines, Monsterabilia, Mars Attacks! trading cards and glow-in-the-dark self assembly model kits!

Trashfield includes over 100 reproductions of rare ad art, vintage books, toys and magazines with four pages in outrageously garish colour !

Web: <http://www.headpress.com>

Old issues of *Trashfiend* are still available from:

Stigmata Press
Trashfiend
Web: <http://thetrashcollector.com/>

COMEDY DVDS

A Private Function
1984
Reissued 2009
R4 DVD
Comedy
Britain
Handmade Films
Umbrella
Entertainment



It is 1947 and Britain is still struggling under food rationing as their economy gets back onto a post-war footing. Basic foods are severely rationed, luxury foods like bacon are rare and only available on the black market and the black market is only available to those who can afford it. The local butcher is in on the meat racket but for the rest of the village, one woman says "I'm not always sure we aren't eating something that ran in the 2:30"

Gilbert is a young chiropodist who finds out that the local upper class can not only afford the black market but are raising an unlicensed black market pig for their own use. They will serve it as the main piece of a banquet for the town's elite to honour the young Princess Elizabeth on the occasion of her impending marriage. The elite are snubbing Gilbert's social-climbing wife Joyce and his ever-hungry mother-in-law. Doctor Swaby particularly (Denholm Elliott) has taken a dislike to Gilbert and arranges to have him evicted from his new shop.

"Now, under this National Health Service, any poorly little pillock can come into my surgery and say 'I'm ill! Treat me!' Honestly, sometimes I wonder what the last war was FOR."

For Gilbert, revenge is now becoming an option.

Mr Wormold, the enthusiastic new Meat Inspector, is determined to stamp out the black market in food. Gilbert and his wife are determined to kidnap the pig for their own use.

Taking the pig proves fairly easy but keeping it in the house is not so straightforward. It has a case of diarrhoea from eating rats, rhubarb leaves and offal. The smell is noticeable. Gilbert



must kill and dress the pig, something for which he has not been trained and really has no stomach.

"But she's my friend." complains Gilbert
"Kill her, kill your friend" urges his wife.

The local gentry are also becoming desperate. Without the pig the best they can obtain for their banquet is two turkeys or a can of tuna. Then the word gets out about Gilbert's pig and they confront him. What will happen now? Will the arrogant doctor get his pig back? Will Gilbert get his revenge? Will Mother get her feed of bacon? Will the police get the lot of them? And what of the pig? What does it get out of the deal?

This film stars the familiar trio of Michael Palin, Maggie Smith and Denholm Elliott. There are many other familiar faces from British comedy such as Pete Postlethwaite and Richard Griffiths (you'll recognise them when you see them) and their skills turn this genteel little comedy into a hilarious class struggle. Alan Bennett's script fits these actors like a glove and offers them tremendous opportunity for some great characterisations. My personal favorite is Liz Smith as Joyce's slightly dotty mother. Although it's a minor part she plays it to perfection. She remembers the better days and will eat anything that stands still.

Malcolm Mowbray's sympathetic direction is vital to the film's credibility. It would be so easy to make Joyce look like a pretentious social climber, which she is, but he treats her gently and her aspirations come across as just a sad little foible rather than a major weakness in her character. When it comes to the final showdown, she has the guts to do what must be done.

"Come, Gilbert, I think sexual intercourse is in order"

The film is nearly a quarter of a century old but is still as funny as when I saw it as a new release. Good comedy is timeless.

**Abbott and Costello
Show
Season 2
R4 DVD
B&W TV Series
Beyond Home Ent 2009**

Reviewer:
Bob Estreich



Bud Abbott and Lou Costello teamed up in 1936 to work the burlesque circuit. This was the U.S. equivalent of Britain's music halls. Bud Abbott was at the time one of the best standup comedy straight men in the country and the team quickly became well known. They made the transition from burlesque to radio via the Kate Smith Radio Hour, which was effectively a transplant of burlesque humour to a new medium. In 1939 they signed with Universal Pictures for whom they eventually brought out ten years of hit films.

Many of these films featured traditional burlesque styles, dating back to the silent movie days. They had the standard dialogue, slapstick and pratfall routines that audiences knew and loved. Universal especially produced a range of *Abbott and Costello Meet* ... these films featured one of the Universal stable of stars and monsters such as Dracula (Bela Lugosi), Frankenstein, Captain Kidd (Charles Laughton reprising his 1948 role), even the Keystone Kops (Universal's version of the silent movie group).

During World War 2 they did many shows to boost morale, like *Buck Privates*, and reintroduced many of their earlier routines. They also crossed the USA on a self-funded War Bonds fundraising tour. In New York alone they raised 89 million dollars worth of sales in three days and were honoured by the Mayor.

They also had their personal demons. Both



were hardened gamblers. Both had increasingly poor health. Abbott had epilepsy and a drinking problem. In 1943 Costello went back to work after a round of chronic rheumatic fever and on that day his baby son Butch drowned in a swimming pool accident.

In the 1950s Abbott and Costello moved to television. They did two series of TV shows for CBS starting in 1952, one of which is on this DVD set. The shows were not a success at the time and sponsorship dropped off. This was partly a result of competition from more sophisticated sitcoms like *I Love Lucy* (sophisticated?) and partly because they simply had very little new material. They were just providing visual versions of their old radio jokes which by now were becoming stale. Their increasing age and ill health were starting to count against them as well.

In 1956 the Internal Revenue (tax department) moved in over unpaid payroll taxes. They sold their homes, most of their other assets, and the rights to their films. In 1957 their partnership was dissolved. Lou Costello died on March 3rd, 1959, just after finishing his last film. Bud Abbott died of cancer in 1974.

Their contribution to American comedy was recognized in 2001 when the United States Library of Congress selected *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, the *Killer* for preservation in the National Film Registry as a culturally significant film.

Jerry Seinfeld, one of the current breed of American comedians, saluted them:

"If it weren't for Abbott and Costello, many of the wonderful burlesque routines which are part of the American fabric would have been lost forever."

Their classic "Who's on first" routine has been reworked by many comedians over the years. It is shown on this 5-disc DVD set and demonstrates just how well they worked together. Strangely, their work suffered a lull after their deaths but is now coming to the notice of a new generation of audiences who seem to appreciate their style. Once again Abbott and Costello are back on the distribution lists. This DVD set is a worthy addition. The set also includes much historical footage and many of Lou Costello's home movies, as well as interviews with his daughters that fill in the private lives of these remarkable performers.

Amazon Women on the Moon
Collectors Edition
Universal
R1 DVD

Amazon Women on the Moon was released in 1987 and is American style comedy spoof. It was also known as "*Kentucky Fried Movie II*".



The film is actually a compilation of twenty-one comedy skits of various lengths created by a group of highly regarded directors including Joe Dante, Carl Gottlieb, Peter Horton, John Landis and Robert K. Weiss.

The film parodies B Sci-Fi movies of the 1950s especially those which featured alien worlds filled with dangerous and beguiling women. Classic examples being *Cat-Women of the Moon* (1953), *Queen of Outer Space* (1958) which starred Zsa Zsa Gabor and *Missile to the Moon* (1958). These movie segments are interspersed with fake adverts, shorts and truly bizarre comedy skits.

At times it lacks a little coherence due to this mixture of styles and being a compilation.

These shorts are meant to reflect the banality of late night television as experienced by a bored insomniac who is channel-surfing the night away.

The sheer breadth of the comedy is impressive. From the sheer physicality of the slapstick in the opening sequence starring the then popular Arsenio Hall to the incredibly satirical adverts. There are also parodies of sex hygiene films, horror films, TV talkback shows and more. This is certainly a film which throws a joke a minute. Even if a large percentage of them fall flat there are so many jokes that it is hard not to find



Zsa Zsa Gabor in *Queen of Outer Space*

something humorous to laugh at every few minutes.

The humour ranges from satire to slapstick, crude to refined, satire to spoof - it is all there, thrown at the viewer at a fast pace. Some the skits are just plain outrageous including a nude beauty model spouting morality while walking stark naked through her neighbourhood, township and Church and Michelle Pfeiffer giving birth to Mr. Potato Head in a stunning *It's Alive* spoof. Let's not forget the Ed Begley Jnr. running



around naked in the *Son of the Invisible Man*. There is even a very politically incorrect advert where legendary bluesman B.B. King pleads for donations to

help "Blacks Without Soul!"

There are also lots of amusing cameos, even Russ Meyer appears as a store clerk ! Okay, this is not humour which is especially insightful or intelligent, but it is a lot of fun and to be honest has actually become better with age.

Looking back at *Amazon Women on the Moon* we now find so many of the movies parodies have become part of the history and heritage of "cult and horror film" and hence this makes the comedy even more amusing and memorable.

It would be rather fun to get together some friends, have a few beers and try and pick all the films that are spoofed in this film. I think you would be hard pressed to guess all of them !

The American Way Umbrella Entertainment R4 DVD

The American Way aka *Riders of the Storm* was a quirky 1986 political comedy starring Dennis Hopper. It is one of his lesser known films, still not available in the US at all on DVD and until recently only released in the United Kingdom as "*Riders of the Storm*". Umbrella Entertainment has released a clear and impressive print in Australia under the title "*The American Way*".

The American Way is a stridently political, even radical comedy, lampooning conservative politics, American foreign policy, religious televangelists and censorship. It centres on a group of Vietnam Vets who run a pirate TV station which flies around the world in a converted B-29. They are all very eccentric characters lead by "The Captain" played by Dennis Hopper in his usual off-the-wall manner. Their television channel is called SM TV (pronounced S & M TV!) and not only broadcasts all manner of media contraband but cuts into other programs (especially those on the conservative side of politics) with all manner of content. They use a barrage of images to disrupt news services, religious channels and anything else that happens to annoy them. These images range from popular musical items (such as Jimi Hendrix and Alice Cooper) to stridently political scenes of war atrocities and violence.

They notice with alarm the growing popularity of a new up and coming right wing Republican politician Mrs. Westinghouse. She stands for a return to strong military values including imposing US values on the world (sound familiar?). She not only sprouts militarism but courts the religious right by claiming she has been "born

Televangelists plying their trade



Dennis Hopper as The Captain

again" on a popular religious broadcast channel.

As SM TV begins a campaign against her, she tries unsuccessfully to have them shot out of the sky and to have their roaming reporter Sam killed. Finally, however, Sam is able to find out a secret about her which is more than enough to destroy not only any chance at the Whitehouse, but any political future at all.

The American Way is incredibly entertaining. For the first twenty minutes or so you may find yourself bewildered by the barrage of media images, film clips, music and characters which hurl themselves at the screen. But as the film settles down and you come to appreciate SM TV's iconoclastic method of radical TV broadcasting the film becomes more and more interesting. It is amazing to realize how timely so much of the political, religious and social criticism is in this film even though it was made some 23 years ago. While it does that that typical "mid Eighties" look, the plot, message, humour and significance of the film stands the test of time admirably. The soundtrack of classic rock is superb.

The acting is solid, the plot entertaining and the humour is dark with constant reflections on Vietnam, war, violence, religious extremism and prejudice. The way in which violent images are projected on the SM TV screens while humorous events are happening in the forefront creates quite a jarring effect. You are amused and laugh at the dark humour, but are also made uncomfortable as you reflect on the images presented and the political messages they communicate.

I am very pleased to find this available from Umbrella Entertainment and recommend it highly as a very unusual comedy with a strong message and a very creative cinematic style.

Buddies
1983
(DVD Release 2009)
Umbrella Entertainment
R4 DVD

Reviewer:
Bob Estreich

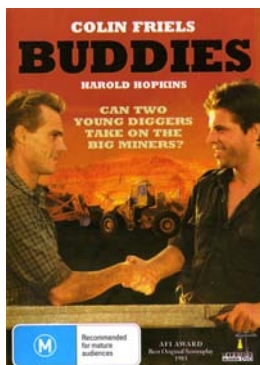
This film is part of Umbrella's recent project to resurrect and reissue Australian films. It started with various Aussie and international classic films as well as a wide selection of films which could be classified as "ozploitation".

Many of the films are characterised by a slight lack of professional slickness that is more than made up for by the sheer enthusiasm of the actors, stunts and plots. Buddies is another of this kind. The print came from the National Film and Sound Archive.

It is set on the gemstone fields around Emerald in Queensland. The main product of the fields is gem-quality sapphire, dug up under primitive conditions by groups of eccentric miners and sold direct to buyers from Thailand's gem-cutting industry for large sums of cash.

Malcolm and Johnny (Colin Friels and Harold Hopkins) are two such miners. They and their friends are digging a rough but ready living from the dry, dusty country. As one claim is dug out they move on to another.

All is well and the lifestyle suits them until the big mining companies move in, riding a boom in sapphire prices. Malcolm has the ability to spot good sapphire country, but he is hopeless at filing claims to it.



His new claim is jumped by a big company and the battle is on.

Into this tense mix we throw some visiting tourists, a divorced aircraft salesman and the sex-crazed neighbouring digger, Stella (Kris McQuade).

Can Malcolm and Johnny survive against the big miners?

Can their friendship survive in the face of their different ideals and hopes?

The final showdown against the big company is decided with bulldozers as the weapon of choice but the personal conflicts will be harder to resolve.

It is all rollicking good fun and I am surprised this film has stayed hidden for so long. It won writer John Dingwall the Australian Film Industry Award for Best Screenplay in 1983 but the film dropped from sight until now, swamped by the flood of blockbusters from Hollywood. Considering it is now a quarter century old, it has survived well.

The colours and cinematography are crisp and clean and show the dry dusty outback well. The acting is excellent and the script believable.

Buddies is such a good film that I was surprised I hadn't even heard of it.

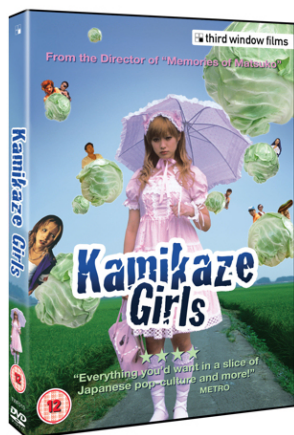
I suspect many Australian film buffs will not have seen it either, so here's your chance.



Kamikaze Girls Third Window Films R2 DVD

Japanese with clear English sub-titles.

Kamikaze Girls, written and directed by Nakashima Tetsuya, created by hot cult author Novala Takemoto.



The secret of Takemoto's continued success in Japan (his debut, *Sewing Machine* sold 500,000 alone) is the sympathetic portraits of his protagonists filled with ennui that have struck a chord with disenfranchised young Japan.

The girls that populate his candy-coloured universe are, as the Japanese proverb goes, the protruding nails. Ever mindful of their growing pains and, of course, the fickle tastes in kitsch fashion that fill the painfully-fashionable streets of Harajuku and Daikan-yama.

In this psychedelic journey into the heart of Japanese pop culture we meet Momoko (Kyoko Fukada) who is the 17-year-old product of a highly dysfunctional marriage. Her father is a fake Versace clothes seller who is a failed Yakuza hitman and her mother has left to seek her fortunes elsewhere. Momoko does not like the world she lives in and dreams of the Rococo age of 18th century France.

When her father makes enemies selling too much fake clothing they must return to her grandmother's house in rural Japan. Her grandmother, while not senile, used to professional fight when she was younger and has hence lost quite a few brain cells as well as the sight in one of her eyes.

Momoko desperately needs to make money to support her expensive tastes in frilly dresses, bonnets and other Rococo attire. She likes to dress like a Lolita and this is not a cheap pastime. In the city she could con unsuspecting rich men with stories of sick friends and bogus charities, but in the country it is far more difficult. She advertises the remaining stock of Versace clothes her father has on hand and makes friends with Ichigo (Anna Tsuchiya).

Ichigo is a Yanki, high up in a local biker gang and is violent, spits regularly and has little class



Momoko Ryugasaki

and style. However, since opposites attract, these two strange and unusual girls are brought together by embroidery and soon they are on a journey to friendship.

This is a very unusual comedy which is rich in pop culture references, sarcasm and odd humour. The cinematography is a rich tapestry of live action, special effects, animations and dream and fantasy sequences.

It is hard to describe the sheer intensity of the look of this film - it is bright, lush and garish, using colour, animation and unusual animations to explore the space where two worlds collide and a friendship develops. The dialogue is witty, funny and always amusing and the main characters are fun and endearing.

This is a playful film which is good natured, very entertaining and visually startling. Extras include an interview with cast, a trailer and trailers of other Third Window titles

My Name is Bruce
Special Edition:
2 Discs
R4 DVD
Beyond Home
Entertainment

Bruce Campbell is an actor who celebrates cult cinema. His popularity rose to fever pitch with *Evil Dead* and *Evil Dead II* and throughout his career he has continued to thrill his fans with his B grade output. While other actors have dreamed of the big time, Campbell knew which side his bread was buttered on and accepted pretty well every role thrown at him, from *Maniac Cop* to *Serving Sara*.

Obviously many of these roles were simply to "pay the bills" but he took it in his stride and made us laugh at his less than successful screen roles and shared his joy at his successes.

At the same time his directorial debut of the 2005 *The Man With the Screaming Brain* was pretty dismal and it did not bode well for the future. However, *My Name is Bruce*, certainly dispels these fears and is a truly hilarious film and a success on so many levels.

The plot is simple but effective. Bruce Campbell is confused with his onscreen persona of Ash from *Evil Dead II* and abducted and taken to the

Bruce Campbell & the town folk face off
Against Guan-di



Bruce Campbell & his surprise Birthday Gift

small mining town of Gold Lick in the boot of the car of a very young devoted fan. It seems some dumb teens have desecrating a graveyard and awakened the Chinese god of War, Guan-di.

Now Guan-di aims to kill anyone related to the teens who have done this dastardly deed and in a small town like Gold Lick that's about all of them. It is a small hick town and Bruce is not at all impressed when he first arrives. After a while Bruce comes to think this is a birthday prank from his agent (Ted Raimi) but when confronted with Guan-di he realizes the awful truth. He has been hired to be a real hero and fight a real monster.

This is a film packed with slapstick, fast paced jokes, self referencing humour and lots of self depreciation. Campbell has the ability to laugh at himself and include us in the joke. Part of the humour is the way in which a real life monster drama is intertwined with the making of the film "Cavealien 2". This mixture of fantasy and reality, the "real" life Bruce Campbell and the on screen actor makes lots of room for all sorts of humour. It also helps give free reign to D grade special effects including silly men in rubber suits; even Guan-di looks so bad, he is marvellous !

It is a remarkable person who can laugh at himself, make fun of his career and films and together celebrate the extreme, if not fanatical, devotion of his fans. Campbell is magnificent sending himself up as arrogant, drunken, indulgent and insensitive.

There are only a few actors who can take such humour to the lengths Campbell does and make it work.

There are also lots and lots of in jokes from the two local hicks who are characters from "*Brokeback mountain*" to the literally hundreds of references to his and other Sci Fi and horror films.

There are also of extras including The Making of Cavealien, Waxing Philosophical with Bruce Campbell, the Making of and a commentary.

Nuns on the Run **1990**

Britain

Produced by:

George Harrison

Denis O'Brien

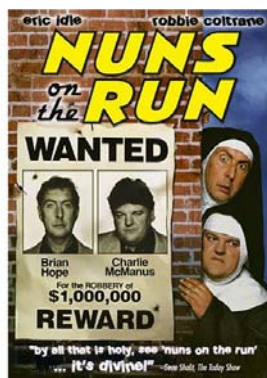
Written and Directed by

Jonathan Lynn

Handmade Films

Umbrella

Entertainment 2009



Reviewer: Bob Estreich

This classic piece of British humour features Eric Idle and Robbie Coltrane as Brian and Charlie, a pair of gangsters on the run from a Chinese Triad gang, the police, a girlfriend and their own gang.

Brian and Charlie are unhappy with the increasing violence of the younger gangsters running their mob, but they know what the repercussions will be if they try to retire. They decide to go straight but first must get some money first to finance their flight to Brazil.

Their boss has found out about their plans to leave and marked them for death, planning to



steal drug money from a Triad gang with Charlie and Brian being killed during the robbery. Brian and Charlie meanwhile have decided to steal the proceeds of the robbery from their own gang.

Everything goes wrong, of course, and they find themselves hiding in a convent disguised as nuns and carrying a million pounds of stolen money. From here the plot moves into the farcical comedy the British are so good at.

There is love interest, alcoholic nuns, naked teenage girls, cross-dressing and even a nun who has her hand in the convent's till to the tune of fifty thousand pounds, which she has gambled on the horses. It can only end in tears (of laughter), except for the rather worrying sight of the very large Robbie Coltrane dressed as a nun. (Why do the British like to dress in drag?) He looks too perfect in the part.

There is also a bit of fun at the expense of the doctrines of the Catholic Church, but it is light-hearted and inoffensive.

There is more than a passing resemblance to the cheeky Carry On type of humour and the earlier St.Trinians. The characters are fairly stereotypical, the action predictable, the one-liners thick and fast - however. In spite of the increasingly demented plot the film never loses its direction or its ability to entertain.

The humour is not particularly sophisticated, not in the Monty Python tradition, but for this style of film it doesn't have to be. It's just good entertainment and a great laugh.

It is surprising how many people remember this film from its earlier release years. Now you have a chance to enjoy it again. This is Handmade Films' last movie and it is good to see it re-released.



Twelve in a Box
2009
Fat Features
Icon Film Distribution
R4 DVD

Reviewer: Bob Estreich



This is one of those wonderful low-key comedies that the British do so well.

The plot is fairly conventional. Twelve ex-schoolmates and their spouses gather at a country home for what is supposed to be a school reunion. A wealthy benefactor offers them a challenge – a million pounds each if they can spend ninety-six hours in the house together. The conditions are simple. No phones. No-one leaves or everyone loses their money. Anyone who enters the house stays there for the 96 hours. No exceptions.

Right from the start we can see they are a motley group of characters and there is going to be friction. There is the grey-haired granny with thoroughly mercenary tendencies, the pushy businessman, the short guy who was picked on right through his school days, the religious lady nutcase and so on. Can they unite to win the money? Although initially none want to play the game, the lure of the money wins out.

Problems arise very early when the little old lady's husband dies of a heart attack after revealing that he needs the money desperately. All his investments have failed and they are destitute.

The religious lady is hilarious as she explains to God that she will use the money for good works, but starts to negotiate over whether she could keep just a little of the money to buy a new car so she can do so without the risk of breakdowns. As the negotiations continue she finds other things that she could do with the money, all to her benefit and, of course, in the Lord's name.

"There have been greater miracles than this, you know. After all, of all the days Jesus could have been born, he was born on Christmas Day. Is that not a miracle?"

Sexual tension develops, too. We find that a number of the men and women are, shall we say, somewhat liberal in their sexual preferences. This leads to constant threats for one or another of the group to walk out and so deprive

them all of the money. This becomes a problem when the spouse of one of the group tracks him down. What to do with her? Simple. Truss her up and store her in one of the spare bedrooms. The two burglars who choose this weekend to do the mansion over? They receive the same treatment.

"What do you do? Collect people?" asks one of the burglars.

The religious lady falls down the steps and is killed. Gradually the collection of bodies and kidnap victims increases. Then the police arrive.

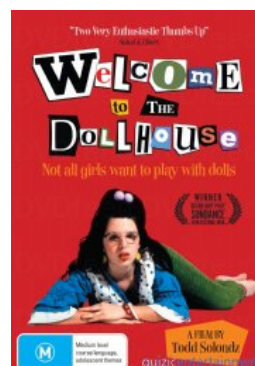
The film is not as dark a comedy as it sounds. As director John McKenzie increases the pace the situation becomes more farcical than dark. It has a lot in common with a late Carry On film – the somewhat stereotyped characters, the increasingly demented storyline plunging relentlessly from impending doom to total disaster, the improbable bungling. This similarity is not accidental. Producer Bruce Windwood said

"John (McKenzie) and I had just finished working together on a short film and were discussing the feeling we both had that the film industry in this country seemed to be missing its self confident 'Britishness' which characterised its most successful period up to the 1960's. We are fans of the classic Ealing Comedy movies, and felt that it was time to re-visit that style of movie; a style which simply sets out to entertain."

That the film works is due to the tight direction, excellent script and a quite competent group of actors. If you liked the Carry On films you will love this one. It's well worth a look.

Welcome to the Dollhouse
Beyond H.E.
R4 DVD

Todd Solondz is an American screenwriter and indie film director. His work, though considered comedy, is in a dark style; marked by cynicism and sarcasm. It is usually provocative, bitter and yet at the same time socially aware. All of his movies examine the dysfunction that exists under the radar of middle class life and use potentially shocking themes to great effect.



Prior to *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, Solondz' first film was *Fear, Anxiety and Depression* (1989), which while challenging in content was not especially successful. It also lacked the humour found in his later work. Solondz has many clashes with the studio over the adaptation of his screenplay to the big screen and it wasn't until 1995 that he was willing to make another film.

Welcome to the Dollhouse is a bleak and venomous look at life for a 12 year old in 7th grade. It focuses on Dawn Wiener (Heather Matarazzo), a young and somewhat awkward girl who is trying to find her place in life. She is teased and abused at school and degraded at home, her parents preferring her prettier ballerina sister.

Her older brother, Mark is only concerned with getting into college and is neurotic and nerdy. Her mother is clearly the head of the family and the father acquiesces in any argument. It is a perfect portrayal of middle class dysfunction. Dawn finds herself in constant trouble, whenever she tries to defend herself at school, she finds herself the target of the teachers attention, it seems they don't like her much either. Solondz portrays her as a likeable character driven to the edge of neurosis by a lack of affection and understanding. Dawn strikes up a strange friendship with Brandon, the school dropkick. His home life is a shambles, his brother is intellectually disabled and finally Brandon is accused of selling drugs and he runs away from home to avoid reform school. Again Brandon is portrayed in a sympathetic way, he is clearly a troubled teen, even threatening to rape Dawn, yet underneath they are both rather lost.

The story is further developed with Dawn's obsession with Steve Rodgers. A long haired Nick Cave lookalike, who while pandering to Dawn's affection, steals money from their home. At her parents anniversary party she finds him having a bit with one of the girls and asks him to join her club house. He shows his truly colours and humiliates her.

All the characters in *Dollhouse* are "damaged goods" and the world created is a sad and lonely one, while we may prefer not to admit it, it has a strong ring of truth to its portrayal of relationships and family life.

The climax of the film is when Missy goes missing. Dawn is asked to tell Missy to get a ride home after ballet practice, she deliberately de-



Dawn Wiener

stroys the note. Missy is kidnapped and kept in a neighbors basement watching TV and eating McDonalds and being forced to do pirouettes to satisfy her captors ballet fetish ! Her tutu is found in New York so Dawn runs away to try and find her, but nobody really notices or cares she is gone. When Missy is found unharmed, she again becomes the focus of the family's life and Dawn is left ignored and on the peripheral - where she has been all along.

In the last scene, we see Dawn reluctantly going on a school holiday to Disney World. Everyone on the bus is singing on the way there, and Dawn reluctantly joins in as the film ends on her solo voice, she has finally given up.

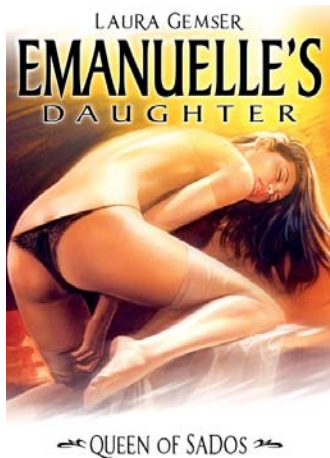
Solondz went on to make *Happiness* which took many of the themes explored in far more explicit detail and within the explosive context of sexual abuse. In 2004, Solondz made a sequel to *Dollhouse* in *Palindromes*. It begins with "In Loving Memory of Dawn Wiener," and opens with her funeral, revealing that Dawn went to college, put on weight and committed suicide.

Welcome to the Dollhouse won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival but was only a limited success at the box office. It is a strange comedy; dark, bitter and at times vicious, it portrays a very dysfunctional world filled with neurosis and emotional pain. There are laughs and humour along the way but at times I wonder if we are actually laughing more in discomfort than in joy !

At the same time it is a meaningful film filled with superb performances, a perverse plot and scenes which will stay with you for quite some time.

SYNERGY, SEX AND GENRE CINEMA

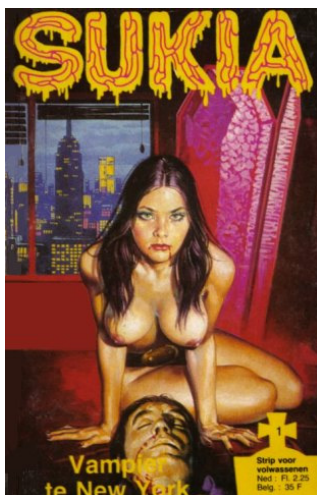
Erotica is a term which means different things to different people. Some people find soft content acceptable but find more explicit films confronting. At the same time many people are more worried about violence in films than sex.



The classification of eroticism varies greatly from country to country and seems culturally determined. In Europe there seems to be less problems with explicit content as long as it is within the context of an overall film. In the U.S while television is heavily censored for both content and language, you can release pretty well anything on DVD as long as it is consensual. (This obviously excludes child sex, non consensual sex and non consensual violence).

In Australia we generally allow more leeway on television in regards to language, violence and moderate sexual content but explicit sex is a real issue on TV, film and DVD due to the effect religious pressure groups have had on government policy. While some states have a N.V.E (non violent erotica) classification for film and DVD, most do not.

At present there is a ban on all adult computer games of an R rating and above.

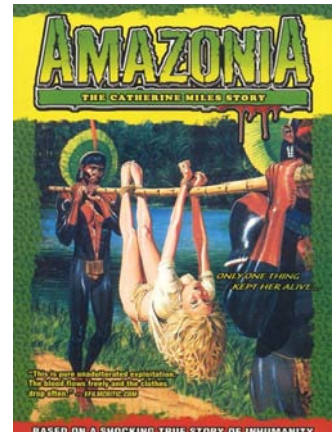


The approach of *Synergy* magazine is to review "genre" films and we feel no need to justify reviewing films with adult content. Our criteria for a review is not whether a film includes explicit sex but whether a film is interesting.

Our approach is to examine plot, character, cinematography

and other related content and then decide how to review a film. Whether it includes explicit sex is a secondary and to be honest, fairly minor concern.

This being said we have no interest in reviewing the bland adult films which are flooding the market and seem to simply offer 90 biological functions in 90 minutes. If a film does not have a plot or entertainment value then regardless of what it shows (or doesn't) we won't review it. We don't care if a film has the latest and greatest adult star (male or female) or the most extravagant sex acts, if it doesn't have some plot, character and entertainment value, then it won't get past our reviewers !!



Most issues of *Synergy* include erotica of some form or another. To avoid possibly offending the sensibilities of those who find the display of sex organs shocking we will include notes to clarify the rating of these titles. After the region coding, we will either describe the film as Mature (M), which means it includes what could be described as soft adult content) or Explicit (E), which means it includes more explicit adult content.

Since *Synergy* is a magazine aimed at a mature audience interested in exploring the boundaries of cinema, art and literature we feel it would be a shame to ignore the many challenging and interesting films on the market simply because they include adult content.



We hope you agree.

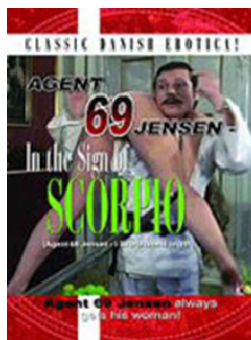
COMEDY EROTICA



**Agent 69 Jensen
In The Sign of
Scorpio**
1977, re-released 2009
Denmark
Music Video Distributors
R1 DVD (E)

Reviewer: Bob Estreich

Danish with subtitles



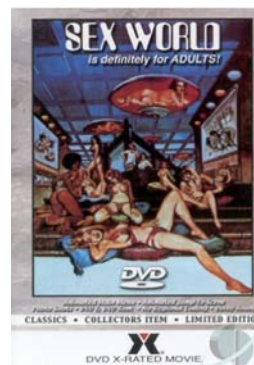
With the spread of the video recorder in the late 1970s it seemed only natural that the adult film industry would take advantage of it to open up a whole new market of erotic films for home use. Until this period there were very few erotic films available publicly. Any new film had to first find a distributor, then get a rating from the local censors, then find cinemas willing to show it. In Australia and much of the rest of the world this usually meant after-midnight showings at the local drive-in theatre.

In 1969 the Danish government made a brave move and decided that what people wanted to watch was none of the Government's business. They removed censorship on adult films and this encouraged a rapid development of their native film industry. Such films as *I Am Curious (Yellow)* (1967), *Danish Escort Girls* (1976) and *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* (1970) gave the country a bit of an undeserved reputation for being sex-obsessed. When the films were translated to video the market flourished.

In the United States the same thing happened. The wowers complained about the drop in moral values and predicted the end of civilisation, but distribution of these films on videotape was too strongly entrenched before they could become organised enough to try to prevent it.

Both countries had ca-

pable local film industries from which to draw technical and production staff and many U.S. films resemble a standard feature movie of that time – good sets, high-quality cinematography, recording on film, and with at least some emphasis on acting ability.



Often they took their inspiration from mainstream films of the time and reworked the plot to produce either a spoof like *Flesh Gordon* (1974) or a copy of a well-known film like *Sex World* (1978)

There was a strong difference between the types of films from the two countries. The Scandinavian films generally depicted the sexual content as good fun in the context of a semi-serious plotline. The U.S. productions very quickly degenerated to a relentless progress towards the “money shot” and gradually any pretence of a plot faded. Their industry became straight pornography rather than entertainment. Such is the appeal of some of the earlier films that they are now getting a new lease of life on DVD.

Billiards anyone...



This film comes from the period when Danish filmmakers could still produce a good, funny romp. It is part of the *Agent 69 Jensen* series which is something like a cross between *Get Smart* and Inspector Clouseau, with naked women. Jensen is an agent for Danish Intelligence and manages to bumble his way through convoluted plots, larger than life villains, and very attractive young women to complete his mission.



A happy ending...

The baddie in the film is the evil Skorpion, who has an enjoyable habit of ripping the clothing off his young female assistants when angered.

The plot revolves around a missing microfilm that Danish Intelligence wants to hand over to Agent Horsepower of the CIA. Unfortunately it is given to the wrong man and the hunt is on to recover it. All the protagonists finish up in the Skorpion's hideaway.

Here a long-drawn-out but quite funny set of sex scenes ensues as they look for the microfilm. Although the sex content is close to what you would expect from an American film it is done with taste and style, rendering it quite inoffensive and allowing you to enjoy the humour. The film is full of predictable clichés, farce and good fun.

Its stars were mostly quite well known in the genre. The attractive Anna Bergman also appeared in *Adventures of a Taxi Driver* and *Intimate Games*.

Torben Bille plays a demented dwarf henchman, and later did *The Sinful Dwarf* (1973), the ultimate dwarf exploitation film. Ole Soltoft as Agent 69 continued through the series and went on to appear in more than thirty films including the *Bedroom Mazurka* series.

If I have a criticism to make of the film, it is that all the young women are tall attractive blondes and after a while you lose track of which is which.

As if it matters. The film appears to have been shot on film stock rather than direct to video, which at that time had some serious technical shortcomings. As a result we get a crisp, clean print with vibrant colours which really shows off some of the lavish sets (and the tall naked blondes).

Don't expect great cinema from this film. It is simply a happy little piece, a good example of its times, with quite a lot of inoffensive sex content. Since it's not trying to out-porn anyone, it is good entertainment.

It's hard being evil



The Erotic Adventures of the Three Musketeers
1992
U.S. Region 0 (M)
Director Paul Norman
Private Screening Collection

Reviewer: Bob Estreich

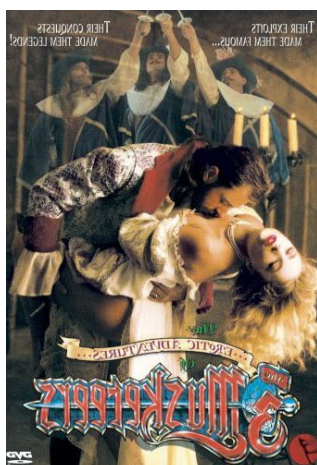
Their exploits made them famous. Their conquests made them legends!

This is a classic but very silly movie. What it loses in plot and acting



ability is not made up anywhere else. It's basically good fun with tits.

There is also a big mystery in the movie. Well-known porn star Ron ("The Hedgehog") Jeremy makes a brief appearance as the Cardinal's Guard Captain, but keeps his clothes on. I don't think Ron was ever employed for his acting ability so why is he in this film at all?



The story is based very loosely on the original Alexandre Dumas tale of three musketeers loyal to the Queen of France. She is negotiating political matters with an Englishman (whom she is on very friendly terms with) and rewards him with a valuable necklace presented to her by her husband the "Queen" of France (he's really the King of France but watch the film and you will see what I mean).

The evil Cardinal, the King's rival for power, finds out and sets out to have her punished for treason. The musketeers must recover the necklace for her if they can find time off from wenching, wining and fighting the Cardinal's men.

There is also a would-be female musketeer, a young girl kidnapped by the Cardinal for his pleasure, the seamstress of the Queens (both of them), Ron Jeremy, and so on. All of the ladies appear to suffer wardrobe malfunctions regularly.

This is, of course, a Good Thing for the viewer.

The acting ranges from poor to bloody dreadful and the dialogue is simply awful, as is the finale. The one saving grace is that the women are almost universally attractive. I studied them a number of times to confirm this.

The Queen (the female one) is played by Deirdre Holland, star of *Deep Inside Deirdre Holland*, *Princess Orgasms* and *The Magic Bed*, and many more.

Britt Morgan plays Lady D'Summer (*Brittany Speared*, *Blow Job Bonnie*, etc), Tracey Winn (*Anal of History*, *Saturday Night Beaver*), and Chanel plays Catherine (*Attack of the 50-foot Hooker*, *Rump Reamers*, *Spank-O-Rama*, etc). With talent like this, Director Paul Norman (*Intercourse With The Vampire*, *Edward Penis-hands*) could surely have come up with something better.

There is a fair bit of full-frontal nudity, thankfully only of the women, but actual sex scenes are more implied than realised.

As a sex romp it barely qualifies as soft-core – nevertheless it's going to be quite funny if you have a few mates over and get a few beers into you. It should make a change from watching reruns of *Action Girls*.

The *Erotic Adventures of the 3 Musketeers* has been released in a nice dual pack with *Black Venus*.

Private Screening Collection

<http://www.privatescreeningcollection.com>

A young Ron Jeremy is getting his way but for once keeps his clothes on !

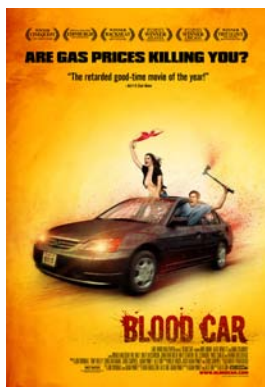


DARK & HORROR COMEDY



Blood Car
R1 DVD
Fake Wood
Wallpaper

Blood Car is a strange indie absurdist comedy by first time director Alex Orr which includes both horror and humour in equal amounts. It was the winner of the New Vision's Director's Award at the Cinequest Film Festival.



A kindergarten teacher invents a car that runs on human blood to combat a shocking spike in petrol prices. *Blood Car* envisions a future where US petrol prices have reached \$40 a gallon and the voracious desire for oil leads to terrible, but funny results.

In the near future, petrol is practically unaffordable and Archie Andrews has had enough. He is a nerdy schoolteacher, a vegan and has a thing for wheatgrass. Like all greenies he is determined to find a cheap alternative energy source for his car. While experimenting with all manner of fuel sources, Archie cuts himself, and discovers that all his car needs is blood, the drawback is that it must be human.

The only one in town who can afford to drive, Archie attracts the attention of sex-crazed Denise. As Archie fulfils Denise's need for transportation, he satisfies his ever-expanding libido.

Archie gets some more fuel !



Sex crazed Denise

Meanwhile, the sweet Wheatgrass drinking hippy Girl who loves Archie for who he truly is, watches helplessly as Archie is devoured by lust. In order for Archie to continue to attract Denise with his car, he must have a never-ending supply of blood and this has dire consequences for those around him.

Archie also does not realized that he is being observed by government agents who are very anxious to learn why his car is still on the road—agents who will make Archie face the ultimate decision.

Blood Car is based on an interesting idea but really does not offer enough to sustain a whole film. A vegan protagonist luring people to their deaths to keep his car going is certainly a unique take on the fuel crisis, but the plot wears a bit thin after a while. It needs more than one concept to keep it running, while it does have a "romantic" love story sub plot, it needs another layer to keep your attention.

Blood Car does have some good horror moments and there are enough jokes, zany characters and bizarre filming to make it worth watching.

Web: <http://www.bloodcar.com>

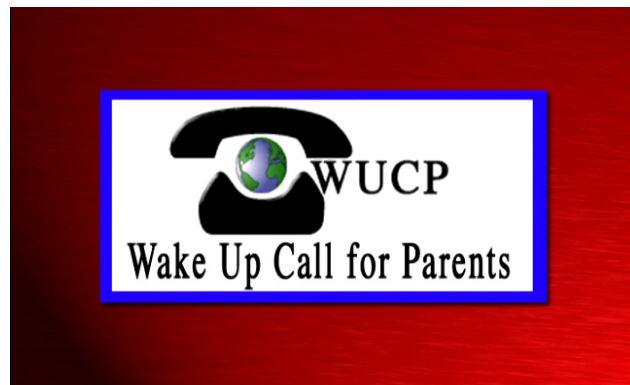
**Hell's Half Acre
K Studios
R1 DVD**

Hell's Half Acre moves between comedy, grindhouse and horror and offers a cheesy low budget tale of serial killers, ghosts and gore. It begins with a rather fun seven minute introduction. It is presented as a "paid announcement" from a group called "Wake Up Call for Parents". It is filled with such the family-values angst and moral outrage that you at first consider that it may be real. Slowly, however, as the tone moves from angst to hysteria the satire becomes obvious and sets the exploitation genre tone for the film itself.

Hell's Half Acre opens with a group of friends looking for a missing girlfriend. When they locate her naked dead body in a dungeon under Bob Moore's house they decide to take revenge. In a totally over the top scene they beat Moore up, tie him and his young son to a chair and then set the house on fire. This really gives you fair warning of the presentation of *HHA*, it is filled with cheesy, excessive and deliberately exaggerated horror violence which is filmed using classic exploitation and horror cinematography.

We then move forward ten years later to the anniversary of the killings – exactly what you would expect in a splatter film ! A couple is parked at a secluded location with the boyfriend,

The Death of Moore and his son



Rather fun Wake Up Call for Parents

Steve, complaining that he can't ever seem to get any. Nicole, the girlfriend, sees a strange isolated figure near a tree but it soon disappears. Before Steve can drive away it smashes into the car with a sledge hammer and then as Steve lies bleeding on the ground takes a running jump and smashes the hammer into his head !

Of course when Nicole goes to the police they accuse her of playing a prank and then being hysteria, when she grabs the detective's gun they lock her up. Only the next day do they find Steve murdered and a rampage of rather nicely presented if not extreme killings begin.

HHA is a strange amalgam of exploitation, grindhouse and dark comedy. It certainly has solid horror moments with some great scares and bloody antics, but the tone is generally that of black humour. This is especially evident with the film being prefaced with the Wake Up Call for Parents warning and Spitshine singing the "Hell's Half Acre" song extolling the virtue of killing.

Of course this is a low budget film and the acting is a little wooden here and there, but Tesia Nicoli as Nicole is surprisingly successful and the killer certainly send a chill up your spine.

The mixture of horror, comedy and grindhouse actually works pretty damn well here and the explosions, gore and violence are very professionally done. *Hell's Half Acre* ends up packing quite a punch in both the horror and dark humour departments and stands out from many other indie productions in both it's production values and great sense of horror humour !

Hell's Half Acre

<http://www.hellshalfacremovie.com/>

Just Buried

2008

Written and Directed by Chaz Thorne

Producer John Watson

R1 DVD

Liberation Entertainment

R4 DVD

Universal

Web: <http://www.justburiedthemovie.com>

Reviewer: Bob Estreich

Socially challenged Oliver (Jay Baruchel) has just inherited his father's bankrupt funeral home in a rural town. The biggest problem is that since the retirement home across the road burnt down, no one else is dying. The new retirement home was built in an adjoining town where a brash, hypocritical young funeral director is getting all the business. Oliver must face the fact that he will probably have to sell the funeral home to the opposition and this will put the loyal staff out of work.

His attractive young embalmer Roberta, played brilliantly by Rose Byrne, is friendly to him and they go to a bar one night where they swap life stories and get more than a little drunk. On the way home Oliver hits and kills a late-night walker. He falls to pieces, but Roberta is up to the task. They throw his body off a steep hill. She is the County Coroner and embalmer, her boyfriend is the local not-too-bright police constable investigating the death, and her dad is the sheriff. She puts the death down to a broken neck arising from a fall and everyone seems none the wiser. The funeral home has its first funeral since Oliver's father died, but the profit doesn't even put a dent in the debts.

The dead man's walking stick has gone missing. It has been picked up by a local retired actor,



and if the police learn that it wasn't found where the accident happened they will realise that the body was moved and the death covered up. Now the actor, too, must die. He does, entirely accidentally, and so it continues. It seems to be disturbingly easy for Oliver to become a serial

killer, even though the deaths so far are accidental. Although he is still naturally a bit of a nerd, his confidence has improved, he and Roberta are becoming much closer, and the funeral home is making money.

One day one of their corpses is poached by the neighbouring funeral director, and Oliver and Roberta decide that he must die. A handful of old pacemakers is inserted in the body, which is to be cremated. Pacemakers explode dramatically in the fierce heat of the crematorium, so their next funeral becomes that of their ex-opposition. Some of the townsfolk, particularly Roberta's dad, are starting to become suspicious about the sudden death toll since Oliver moved to town.

Oliver and Roberta are married, even though Oliver has to interrupt the reception briefly to kill his new father-in-law. Then Roberta reveals to Oliver what she has been after all along. Now it is Oliver's life in danger.

This is a wonderful little dark comedy, done in good taste and style (if that's the right choice of words for serial killers). Although funny, it is not overplayed. The deaths are just part of the story. The casting is excellent, especially Graham Greene as the funeral home handyman / accountant.

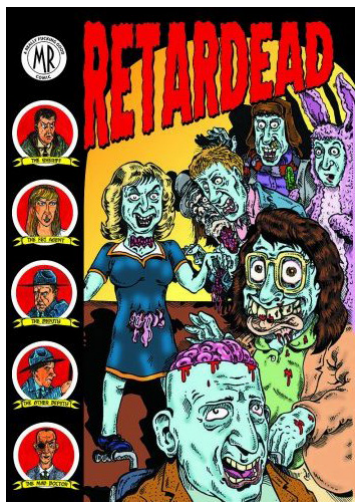
The film has deservedly won awards at the Santa Cruz Film Festival (Best of the Fest), Toronto International Film Festival (official selection) and the Atlantic Film Festival (Best Director).

For an independent, it is well-crafted, well acted, and darkly funny. It's well worth a look.



Retardead
2009
United States
Directed by
Dan West, Rick
Popko
Brain Damage
Films
R1 DVD

Reviewer:
Bob Estreich

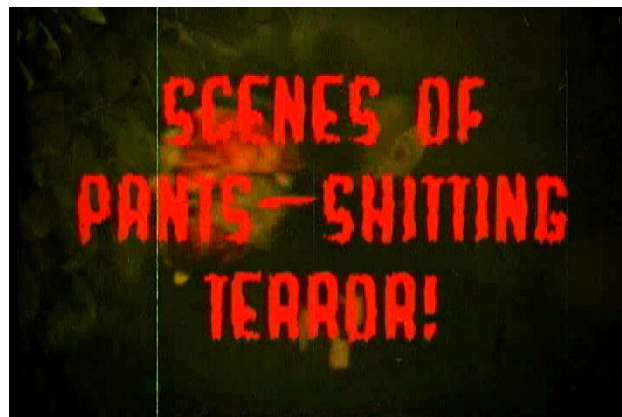


This film is the followup to *MonstURD*, and still doesn't manage to lift itself out of the gutter.

The evil Dr Stern has escaped from his apparent tomb in the sewers and got himself a new job teaching retarded people. He is actually achieving pretty good results with the serum he is injecting into them, if it wasn't for an unfortunate side effect. Sooner or later they turn into flesh eating zombies and must be locked away in the basement of the school. .

Meanwhile, the inept local police force has its hands full with a serial wanker known as the Weenie Waggar who is terrorizing the female population. He also works at the school. Of course, the zombies break loose and start to eat the town, as zombies do. It is up to the last police officers and the Weenie Waggar to stop them.

The film quality is quite patchy. Although the cinematography is far better than I would have expected, the makeup is a bit patchy.

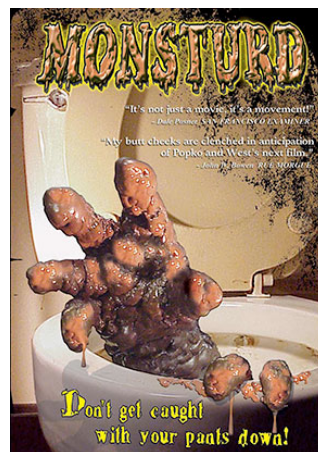


The special effects are as good as any I have seen, and the usual buckets of blood and gore should satisfy the most ardent zombie fan.

I really liked the trashy intro offering food from our cafeteria – “Soda pop in all the colours of the rainbow – red, yellow and brown” and popcorn “topped with a rich yellow buttery-like substance” – and the spoof trailer for *Frankenstein* and the *Bloody Beast of Ghastly Terror*. These set the scene for what was to follow.

For a budget film it's pretty good, even allowing for the occasional wooden acting or dodgy makeup.

It will appeal to Troma film fans especially. Buckets of fun. And gore.



You can find details about *MonstURD* and *Retardead* from 4321 Films, including trailers, theme songs, images, production notes and direct sales of the DVDS.

Web: <http://www.4321films.com>

MonstURD is distributed by **Elite Films**

Retarded is distributed by **Brain Damage Films:**

Web:
<http://www.braindamagefilms.com/>

CINEMA & DVD

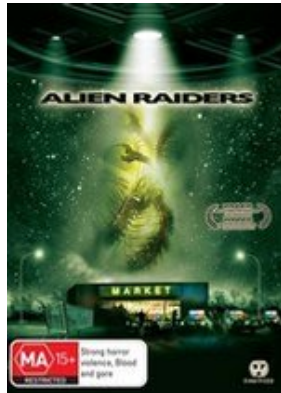
Alien Raiders
Raw Feed
Warner Bros
R4 DVD

Six bandits besiege a small town supermarket announcing that it's a robbery. They begin to kill random shoppers. However, things are seem a little strange. A weird young man (called a spotter by the others) is identifying those who should be killed and the rest are set free. Among the shoppers is an off-duty cop who steps in killing the spotter and one of the bandits.

The remaining bandits lockdown the supermarket and imprison the remaining staff and shoppers. It seems that they are not thieves interested or bandits but scientists who have discovered an alien organism is taking over the bodies of random victims. They have followed the organism across the country and now believe the source to be in Buck Lake.

Since their spotter has been killed they now must test each subject using a test which involves drinking lots of milk and cutting off one of their fingers. Just before the final tests are run the police intervene and offer to negotiate and another spotter is on the way.

At first they seem like bandits, but soon we realize a cosmic battle is underway...



In many ways this story has a lot in common with John Carpenter's *The Thing* but has been transplanted from the wastelands of ice to the bland urban landscape of Buck Lake. Buck Lake is a small, isolated, country town and its bleak existence is beautifully portrayed through the cinematography of its supermarket. It is quite surprising how a simple supermarket can become so claustrophobic with fear at every turn. The long shots of the darkened supermarket with its shelves of food through which an alien hunts down its human prey are impressive to see.

While the story itself is nothing out of the ordinary, the quality of the acting and excellent cinematography makes it a very suspenseful experience. The CGI, blood and guts and violence are used well and do not overpower what is essentially an "alien siege" film. The character development and interactions between the various personalities adds a depth to the plot.

There are a few letdowns, I felt the ending was way too predictable and the final scene with the creature was a bit too derivative of "*Alien*". At the same time it is sometimes difficult to differentiate where homage begins and copying endings and so the influences of *Alien*, *The Thing*, *Species* while obvious did not necessarily stop me enjoying the film.

Alien Raiders has a lot of excellent set pieces, some truly suspenseful moments and manages to transform a suburban supermarket into a scene of abject terror. For that reason alone it is well worth watching !



Aria: Special Edition Second Sight R2 DVD

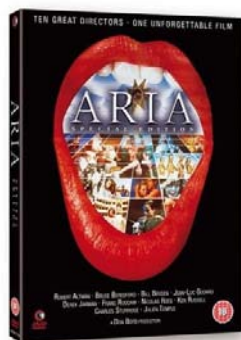
Aria is a luxurious, textured and seductive anthology of images and music. It dates from 1987 and brings together some of the most innovative filmmakers from around the world including Nicolas Roeg, Jean-Luc Godard, Julien Temple, Charles Sturridge, Bruce Beresford, Robert Altman, Franc Roddam, Ken Russell, Derek Jarman, and Bill Bryden.

Each director offers a unique interpretation of a given work of classic music with minimum dialogue. The definition of an *Aria* is a piece of music performed with one voice backed by an orchestra. Accordingly most of the directors have opted for a purely visual exploration of the theme with only two using any dialogue at all and only a minimum of "classic lip syncing".

It is interesting to consider the way in which each director has explored the themes of each work. Some have taken a more literal approach such as Franc Roddam's powerful exploration sex and suicide in Las Vegas as an adaptation for Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* "Liebestod" *Aria* while others are more surreal such as the truly surreal world of Jean-Luc Godard with self-obsessed bodybuilders instead of knights and warriors and naked woman as maidens.

There is, as expected, lots of reflections on the verities of life, especially love. From a moving tale of love and suicide in Las Vegas to a fast flowing story about adultery and indulgence (with a rather fun Elvis figure singing Verdi).

Ken Russell's stunning interpretation of Puccini



Elvis sings Verdi—Too much !!

From Bruce Beresford's evocative scenes of passion in an old city to Derek Jarman's evocation of young love starring Tilda Swinton.

There are also works of stunning creativity. Ken Russell's musings on a psyche under pressure is astounding as he interprets Puccini in a new and exciting way. Starting with a strange and surreal dream sequence, the picture suddenly transforms into a car accident and you realize that these are the musings of a mind damaged by the immense pain of a brutal crash. The characters which appear in her dream are actually the doctors and nurses attempting to save her life. Powerful, beautiful and memorable are words which come to mind. While Robert Altman's reflections on a 18th century opera performance where the insane are used as an audience offers a startling reflection on prejudice and exploitation, especially when you cannot tell who are the performers and who are the audience and moreover who are mad and who are sane !

In any anthology the quality of the pieces will vary, but in *Aria* while some are more intense than others, all are ingenious and inventive and will keep you engaged right to the very end. Each of the pieces stand in their own right linked by a series of interstitials that feature John Hurt preparing for his performance as the clown in Bill Bryden's interpretation of *I Pazzi*, which closes the picture.

The *Second Sight Special Edition* is a delight including a superbly restored print, exquisite sound and some excellent extras. There is a new documentary called "Composing *Aria*" which includes interviews with Don Boyd, Franc Roddam, Nicolas Roeg, Ken Russell, Charles Sturridge and Julien Temple and an insightful commentary by Don Boyd. There is also a stills gallery and trailer.

Bolt
Disney
R4 DVD

Reviewers:

Jeremy & Renata Kong

Bolt is directed by Byron Howard & Chris Williams with the screenplay written by Dan Fogelman & Chris Williams.

The cast includes John Travolta, Miley Cyrus, Susie Essman, Mark Walton, Malcolm McDowell, James Lipton, Greg Germann, Diedrich Bader and Ron Moss. It runs for 96 minutes and is G Rated.

Bolt is the story of a dog who stars in his own science-fiction / action show. Since he was a puppy, he has been brought up to believe that he is a super powered canine who is protecting his young person, Penny. The producers have gone to great lengths to make Bolt believe that he truly has super powers, and that Penny is genuinely in danger.

The producers wish to keep their "method actor" fooled into believing his genuine role as protector, because they believe that the dog's believable acting is one of the main reasons the show is so highly rated (well, at least that is plausible that a dog could act better than some American sit-com actors).

As a result, poor Bolt is only ever unknowingly on set saving Penny from bad guys, or in his trailer where he is confined without normal interaction. Until the day the producers up the anti by kidnapping Penny in a cliff-hanger episode; which sets Bolt off on an adventure across America....



And thus we have the main issues in the film, and the main points that provide the comedy - what happens when a dog doesn't know how to act like a dog?

What happens when he escapes into the real world, and finds out he doesn't have super powers? And can a cat and a hamster teach Bolt how to be a dog, and really live?

There are some very well known actors providing the voices; and their comic timing is impeccable. The main characters are funny and lovable - which works for this film because it is aimed at children. The screenplay is well written (keeping in mind we're not looking for a Pulitzer); and there is a funny and potentially 'green' message in the film: the evils of Styro-foam!

The character animation is very "caricature-ish", which works really well because the characters are caricatures themselves. The animators have captured the animals movements particularly well (the pigeons are brilliant!). The background animation was beautiful, too. It showcased many parts of America, and the animation artists went to a lot of trouble to make the backgrounds very aesthetic.

There are the usual bits and pieces in the bonus section - but the piece on the background animation was pretty interesting. It discussed how each location affected the use of light and colour in the backgrounds, and some of the techniques that Disney utilise in their animation.

It wasn't a world shaking movie, it wasn't very original, but overall it was good wholesome fun. This is an enjoyable, funny family movie, with a good old predictable ending... which is satisfying none-the-less.

This was a good kid's / family movie, that aimed itself at the right demographic. Kid's are pretty much guaranteed to sit through this at least another eight times (and adults might handle an extra once or twice as well!!).

Knowing
2009
R4 DVD and Blu-ray
Director:
Alex Proyas
Icon Entertainment



Fifty years ago a new school opened. As part of its celebrations the young students were asked to draw a picture of what they thought the world would be like in fifty years. Their drawings were placed in a time capsule to be opened fifty years later. Lucinda, withdrawn and possibly somewhat autistic, filled her sheet of paper with strings of numbers.

We move forward to the present day and the time capsule is opened. Astrophysics Professor John Koestler (Nicolas Cage) has a son, Caleb, who attends the school. Each child gets to open an envelope with one of the drawings inside. Caleb opens Lucinda's envelope. At first they can't make any sense of the numbers but a chance event makes Koestler aware that the numbers are not only prophetic, but a warning. They coincide with particular happenings in history and another one of them is due to happen very soon.

It is hard to describe the plot any further without giving too much away, but Koestler's life descends from the quiet academic life he has known to increasing chaos. Just what is at the end of the strings of Lucinda's numbers? Who are the mysterious "whispering people" that his son can hear but he cannot? Why are they watching his son? Can he persuade the authori-

Nicolas Cage as John Koestler



ties to listen to what sounds like his mad theory, and can they do anything about it anyway? This conflict is the heart of the film. Is our life predetermined as a result of the conditions in which we live, or is it completely random?

"I thinkshit just happens"

Nicolas Cage has the sort of on-screen personality that suits his part perfectly. I can't help recalling his depiction of the mild mannered historian in National Treasure who, when called on, turned into a hero to protect what he passionately believed in. I admit I am a fan of Nicolas Cage and in this film he doesn't let me down. Chandler Canterbury (Caleb) is quite a skilled young actor who supports the story well. He is especially human when he misses his dead mother. In spite of the human element the film never gets tacky and overly sentimental. One thing I really liked – there is a formula in U.S. films at present that seems to require a wise-cracking sidekick to every serious lead character. The character is often more an annoyance than a part of the plot. There is such a character but his role is played more like a good friend than a sidekick, and it works well rather than trivialises the film.

Unlike the characters, the plot is sometimes derivative and predictable. The major set scenes are graphic and really well done, but you feel that you have seen all this before. The film is heavy on CGI. Some scenes I thought were just a little artificial-looking, but in hindsight I can't see how they could have been done any other way.

This minor criticism aside, the film is a good suspense piece. It's good to see major actors moving into smaller and even independent films. It works both ways. It can improve the quality of the film, and it can give the actors something better to work with than the usual Hollywood mush. It works well in this film.

Extras on the Australian edition are unknown at this time but will probably include the usual director's commentary, subtitles and a behind-the-scenes featurette.

BTW, Arthur Koestler was an unusual philosopher and writer - interesting choice of surname for the main character.

Photo by Vince Valitutti
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**Love the Beast
Madman
Entertainment
In Cinemas 2009
On DVD July 17th
R4 DVD**

Love The Beast is actor and noted car lover Eric Bana's account of owning, building, rebuilding and ultimately racing the same car for a quarter of a century. At the same time it is also a reflection on identity, friendship and the things that really matter.



"When I was a kid," Bana explains in his voice-over, "I dreamed of being a race car driver." Inspired by the thrills and spills of the Bathurst races and romance of *Mad Max*, Bana persuaded his dad Ivan to buy him a rundown 1974 Ford XB Falcon GT coupe. Soon Bana and his mates begin to make the garage their own and turn that beaten up old car into something special.

Even though Bana soon became a big name in Hollywood he never gave up his Australian roots, his down to earth approach to life and his friends. Of course he now has more money to play with and the car is rebuilt on a more and more grander scale. When we see the final bright red muscle machine it is breathtaking, especially as we wonder just how much he has spent. Regardless of sponsorship, it must have cost a mint.

Erica Bana at the wheel



But what is so appealing is that Bana is not changed by his "star status", he is still one of the team and treats his mates as he always has. The bonds of their friendship have spanned a lifetime and is at the heart of his experience of life. Bana regularly talks of their friendship throughout the film describing the car as the "campfire" around which friends and family gathered to work, joke and bond.

He seems to view Hollywood with a certain cynicism and while he certainly does his job and "walks the red carpet", you can see that it is primarily just a job for him, not a way of life.

In 1996 Bana decided to enter Targa Tasmania, a closed road tarmac race which covers some 2,000 kilometres over 5-6 days. Bana instantly falls in love with the race and states he will be back every year. It takes him 11 years to make good on his promise ! The car has been rebuilt from the ground up, his friends and family are ready and the cameras are running – then within an instant nightmare becomes reality. Superbly presented with the phone call from his child asking how his father is after the accident, you know it is going to happen, but it still is quite a shock.

Along the way we also see interviews from Jay Leno (and see his superb collection of cars), English *Top Gear* host Jeremy Clarkson and Dr.Phil McGraw, the American pop psychologist. The rock soundtrack is superb and the cinematography is marvellous with some great views of Tasmania.

Love the Beast is honest, down to earth and entertaining. We get a small glimpse of the reality behind the myth of Erica Bana as well as sense of just how important his mates are to him. However, above all, you come to realize how much he truly loves his car.

Targa Tasmania is now an annual event conducted each April. The present format is to conduct the event over six days (including a Prologue) on some 2,000 kilometres of tarmac roads. Targa Tasmania caters for up to 300 select cars. Entries are selected from Applications to Compete, by a Vehicle Selection Committee.

More than 200,000 people watch Targa Tasmania each year over the six days, while an international viewing audience of over 480 million has been estimated for each event.

Milk
Universal
R4 DVD

"If a bullet should enter my brain, let that bullet destroy every closet door."

Harvey Milk (1930-1978) was a pioneer of Gay and Lesbian rights in San Francisco. He fought a long and hard battle to become the first openly gay person to be elected to political office in the State of California in 1977. He not only had to battle against the prejudice of colleagues and an uneducated public, but an upsurge in homophobic legislation such as the Briggs Initiative which attempted to legislate against homosexual teachers in schools. Such legislation was fuelled by the religious right which was then spearheaded by the outspoken Anita Bryant.

At the same time Milk did not just fight for Gay rights, he was at the forefront of a progressive approach to politics which also worked for the elderly, disabled, Asian and African Americans.

Milk ran into trouble with fellow district supervisor Dan White who felt that Milk was somehow favoured due to his sexual preference. Disgruntled, alienated and violent, White assassinated both Mayor George Moscone and Harvey Milk creating a national wide awareness of anti gay violence.

The trial of Dan White as a fiasco including the bewildering "Twinkie defence" arguing that too much sugar had unhinged White's psyche. Whatever the cause, he was a sad and disturbed individual who was released from prison after five years and committed suicide a short

[Sean Penn is perfect as Harvey Milk](#)



time later.

While there have been many documentaries on the life of Harvey Milk this is the first bio-pic to combine an honest and brash account of Milk's life interspersed with original footage. Gus Van Sant is a celebrated filmmaker and has been able to get inside Milk's psyche. Rather than offering us a clichéd martyr, he offers us a real man who made great sacrifices for his political career and whose life is documented warts and all.

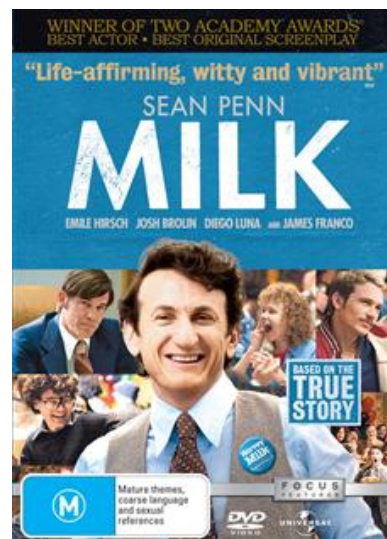
Sean Penn is quite simply brilliant as Milk as is James Franco as his lover. Milk is powerful portrayed yet we also come to appreciate his paranoia and occasional tantrums. Milk realizes the dangerous nature of his political life and records a suicide note which is to be read in the event of his death, this forms the very backbone of the film.

The ending of the film is moving and emotional. The killing by Dan White is presented in a way to avoid sensationalism with the emphasis placed on the great march that followed when some 30,000 people carried candles throughout the streets of San Francisco. This is shown as part of a montage with original footage and profiles of the life of each of the principal characters of the film after Milk's death.

This is a surprisingly successful bio-pic. Rather than being a simple narrative of a life story it offers an intense emotional journey into the heart of the very first man to become an openly gay political leader.

When we reflect on current battles about gay marriage and equal rights for gay and lesbian people we realize just how significant Harvey Milk was.

We also appreciate how far we have come and how far we still have to go to achieve a truly progressive society.



**No Through Road
2008
Nakatomi
Pictures
Accent
R4 DVD**

Reviewer:
Bob Estreich

This film reminds me a lot of Sam Peckinpah's 1971 classic *Straw Dogs*. A mild-mannered man is harassed by local thugs and puts up with it until his home is invaded. Then he turns vicious and shows that every man has his limits.

No Through Road is Australian director Sam Barrett's first feature film and despite the similarities with *Straw Dogs* he has made his own film, not just a remake.

Richard (played strongly by James Helm) is a photographer living in a quiet house at the end of a suburban cul-de-sac. One night he finds a bloodied and frightened girl named Samantha (Megan Palinkas) hiding in his home. She is frightened and doesn't want to tell him what has happened to her, nor for him to call the police. Outside a group of thugs is parked at the end of the street and when she sees them Samantha becomes even more terrified. One of the thugs knocks at the door and wants Richard to hand over Samantha. He says he is her neighbour and she is running a drug lab in her house. He wants to take her and hand her over to the police. His story is unconvincing and Richard refuses.

Richard is now faced with every man's nightmare – what do you do in an unfamiliar and frightening situation? The best he can think of is to ring a policeman friend of his father's. The



cop is murdered by one of the thugs and Richard is now in no doubt that his own life is in danger as well. He prepares to defend his home. The thugs try to break in and he successfully drives them off after seriously injuring two of them with boiling water and an old sword that belonged to his father.

At this point the story loses any similarity with *Straw Dogs*. Richard and Samantha leave the house to call for help but are captured by the waiting thugs. One of them wants revenge on Samantha for a jail term he served, and his friends want vengeance on Richard for their injuries. Their vengeance is terrible. So is Richard's.

The film is a little unusual for an Australian one. Typically many Australian films tend to be a bit over the top in violence, with somewhat caricatured acting and plot. This one is just a good solid vengeance film. Despite the violence and bloodshed it never loses sight of the plot. This makes it far more believable than, say *Wolf Creek*.

This is helped by the acting. Barrett, Richie Flanagan, Keagan Kang and George Shevtsov who play the young thugs. They could almost be a normal group of 20-something football fans if it wasn't for their homicidal tendencies. If there is a disappointing role in the film it is the part of Samantha. Megan Palinkas is a competent actress but the script doesn't give her much to work with. Mostly she is expected to hide and whimper, and without her true role becoming obvious earlier in the film it's a waste of her talent.

Although I thought the film would have been cut fairly severely for violence, it seems to have survived intact.

No Through Road did the rounds of the independent film festivals for about a year before being picked up by Accent Underground. It has managed awards at various foreign film festivals but did particularly well on its home ground at the Western Australian Screen Awards in 2008. *No Through Road* took out Best Director, Best Editing, Best Actor and Best Sound. It just shows what you can do with \$6,500 and a lot of dedication.



Steve Canyon
Series 1 & 2
1958
Released on DVD
2008
United States
B&W
TV Series

Reviewer:
Bob Estreich

Some issues back we reviewed the first Steve Canyon rerelease, a varied set of episodes from the different TV series released between 1958 and 1959. Thirty four 30-minute shows were made and in this DVD we see the first 24.

Volume 2 is shipping at the moment. Steve Canyon was a pilot in the United States Air Force and the stories cover his various missions around the world and in the U.S.

Although the comic strip on which Canyon was based covered his post-WW2 private flying career, the TV series dealt purely with his military career. The US Air Force was created in 1947, the same year that the Canyon comic strip appeared. The USAF seems to have been happy to assist the producers with use of aircraft and facilities to show off their new Air Force.

It is perhaps because of this that the episodes in Series 1 are so varied – air-to-air refuelling, rocket-assisted launching of fighter jets, air safety investigations, UFOs, target drones – it's



all here in a glorious parade of technology. Most of the military footage is genuine, and has historical rarity, especially the scenes of the B52 crash landing.

The main aircraft shown is the Convair F102 jet fighter, but even the humble C47 (military version of the Dakota) gets to star in an episode. We even get nice shots of Russian MiG jets. In the episode dealing with the dropping of a hydrogen bomb we see just about every jet aircraft in the USAF's arsenal.

The photography is stunning, even in black and white. The episodes were done from creator Milton Caniff's private collection of broadcast masters. As a historical sideline they include the original cheesy advertising for Chesterfield cigarettes and their many brands, and ads for ABC TV's various family shows. This makes each episode a true period piece.

Dean Fredericks played Steve Canyon throughout the series and he is ideal for the part. He also did some of the cigarette commercials.

The DVD sets includes commentary tracks on the episodes. It is rare to be able to look back at what was the standard TV fare of the day, and rarer still to see such high-quality work.

Episodes were shot to film in those days and edited by professional film editors, and the professionalism of each episode is higher than some of today's work.

If you like aircraft or flying-oriented adventure stories these are sets you must have.

Milton Caniff Estate

Web: <http://stevecanyondvd.blogspot.com/>



Tuesday
Director
Sacha Bennett
Hopscotch
R4 DVD

Reviewer:
Bob Estreich

With the two leading characters from the cult TV series *Life On Mars*, (Philip Glenister and John Simm) you would expect something a bit better than average. You won't be disappointed. At only 78 minutes this is a short film, but the drama, plot twists and occasional bits of humour are well up with *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels* as an example of British crime stories.

Start with a skilled group of bank robbers known to the police as "the Cowboys". They rob a bank every few days. Their robberies are meticulously planned and well executed. They plan to knock over a bank on Tuesday for a huge emerald being stored there.

On this robbery there are some problems with their plan. Two underpaid women on the bank staff have already stolen the emerald and arranged to post it out to one of the girls' homes.

An elderly man who needs money for his retirement enters the bank and holds it up – just an opportunity robbery – and in the confusion the bank guard shoots himself.

At this point the Cowboys enter the bank, walking right into the shambles. They are surprised to find the emerald is already gone. They are even more surprised when the police burst in sooner than expected, on an exercise to improve their response times.



Two detectives, one nearing retirement, are trying to sort out the mess but are not aware that there were actually three separate robberies. The plot isn't going to get any clearer as further entanglements are revealed. What crime has been committed? Who is getting away with what? Where is the emerald? And there is a totally unexpected twist at the end.

This is Sacha Bennett's first feature film. He has been actor, writer, producer and director for a number of TV shows. His first short film in 2006, *Devilwood*, was not a spectacular success. *Tuesday* deserves to do better.

It has all that is finest in British movies – a quality script with a well developed but not too obvious plot, quality acting, and direction and production values of the highest calibre.

Bennett's background and experience show through. Some of the characters could have been allowed to develop their parts more, but the film looks like it was made on a tight budget and extra running time may not have been possible.

Extras include a "gag reel" that suggests the actors were having a good time making the film, and the usual "making of".



**Women in Prison
Triple Feature
Shock-O-Rama
Region Free NTSC**

"Women in Prisons" is a unique form of exploitation cinema, usually offering everything from desperate women to evil warders, lesbian sex to rape and torture. They vary in intensity and quality and cover the ground from extreme grindhouse to tits and bums comedy fare.

Shock-o-Rama have brought together three truly perverse gems: *Escape from Hell* (1980), *Women in Cell Block 7* (1973) and *The Hot Box* (1972). All of these films are at the wild edge of exploitation and hence not often found available on DVD. It is good to have them in one place but do appreciate their rareness and hence be understanding of the imperfections in the film quality.

Escape from Hell (1980) is a wild jungle WIP film directed by Edward Müller and starring transsexual porn star and actress Ajita Wilson. It is filled with nudity, sex and random acts of violence. Throughout the film we see near naked women working (on a near starvation diet of snake meat and water), being raped, having sex (usually with each other) and being beaten. The sex is rough, sleazy and dirty and every possible voyeuristic pleasure is offered from prison showers and catfights to torture.

The guards are psychopaths, the doctor is a drunk and the camp commander is a stickler for law, order and very hard labour. The camp is set in the middle of the jungle and so the choices are limited; die from overwork and abuse or escape into the jungle and if you can

Women in Cellblock 7



outrun the guards, die from wild animal attack.

Escape from Hell is a prime example of nice and sleazy exploitation cinema, enjoy !

Women in Cell Block 7 (*Diario segreto da un carcere femminile*) is a 1973 Italian WIP classic from Rino Di Silvestro starring the sexy Anita Strindberg and the lovely Jenny Tamburi. Originally released in the US as a cut 80 minute release, this is the full 100 minute uncut edition.

This is a fascinating and somewhat convoluted WIP film. It focuses on what is essentially a mafia crime story, where "the Don" is continually beaten by mob figures trying to locate some missing drugs. The Don, however, is not who he seems and is actually an undercover Interpol agent. Since his life is on the line, his daughter, the sexy Anita Strindberg, goes undercover in a woman's prison so she can get close to the girl who actually stole the drugs.

Of course, this rather complex plot is actually used as a method to get Strindberg into prison and from there get into heavy exploitation territory. As would be expected, the prison has lots of vicious guards, lesbian action, shower scenes, sex and violence.

The combination of a mafia crime film with a sleazy and nasty WIP tale is rather successful. It was a rave success in the Seventies so it is nice to see it on DVD.

The Hot Box (1972) is a true American classic WIP produced by Jonathan Demme (Caged Heat) and cult film maestro Roger Corman and starring the seductive Laurie Rose. It is a bit different from the first two films in the collection. It is the story of four beautiful nurses taken captive by rebels who want these medical missionaries to ply their trade in service of the revolution. As the junta strikes back, the ladies are caught in a deadly crossfire. The nurses seem to spend most of their time topless while plotting their escape from the rebels. It is a more of a sexy nurse type exploitation film than the other films in this collection but it still packs lots of guns, explosions and car chases!

Shock-O-Rama presents three films on two discs, with *Escape from Hell* and *Women in Cell Block 7* on one, and *The Hot Box* on the other with a trailer vault for other Shock-O-Rama releases. There is also a rather nice eight-page booklet featuring photos and posters, and some background on the films.

Woman Despiser
Kadin Dusmani
Onar Films
R0 DVD

I am always excited when I hear about a new release from Onar. They focus on rare and unusual films which are released in very limited editions; this one has a run of 500 copies.

The films they locate are not your run-of-the-mill world cinema, but titles which would never see the light of day except for the dedication of this amazing company.

When you hear the term Giallo, Turkey does not immediately come to mind. Giallo was primarily an Italian film tradition which took its name from street paperbacks dedicated to crime which had yellow covers, hence Giallo or Yellow. These films became a major success with many significant Italian filmmakers producing such thrillers. They were usually marked by brutal murders and liberal servings of sex and violence as well as twisted if not surreal plots. Dario Argento began his career as a Giallo filmmaker notably with *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (1970), *The Cat o' Nine Tails* (1971) and *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* (1972) and has recently returned to the genre with his latest release which is aptly called *Giallo*.

Woman Despiser (Kadin Dusmani) is a 1967 Turkish Giallo, a rare breed indeed. It is a strange and wonderful amalgam of crime, sleaze, violence and a uniquely Turkish addition to the genre; gothic cinematography. The film

Killer at the Window



Great Doco on Turkish Sci Fi and Horror

has a wonderfully confusing look with noir like photography, misty nights, a killer who dresses with demonic masks and a bewildering and at times overpowering soundtrack. This is truly a great find.

Woman Despiser has a fascinating and convoluted plot, lots of sleaze and a mood which is surprisingly edgy and tense, helped along by gothic/noir type black and white cinematography and a camera style which seems to tilt and move from all directions. While at first the killer looks rather silly in his demon mask, slowly the strange even comic masks he wears become symbolic of the perverted darkness which eats at him. With the police talking of rape, murder and necrophilia as well as "abuse of the bodies" you know something is very wrong. There is, of course, no graphic sex in the film but the use of inference and the constant display of woman changing clothes, dancing, kissing and so on gives the film a strong erotic charge. The mixture of a detective drama with a crime story, gothic elements and a noir look creates a very weird Giallo experience.

There are also lots of unusual artistic touches which emphasize the gothic presentation of the film. These range from the unexplained appearance of fog in the room of the first murder to Ekrem Bora's girlfriend being pursued by a host of masked devils though a cobweb infested mansion.

The presentation of the film is exemplary, considering the age and rarity of the film, once again Onar have done a sterling job. There is also Ayman Kule's bio notes on Director İlhan Engin and star Ekrem Bora.

Included on the disc is segment three of the Turkish Fantastic Cinema documentary - this one dealing with horror and sci-fi.

Web: <http://www.onarfilms.com>

HORROR DVD



100 Feet R4 DVD Icon Films

100 feet is the distance a prisoner can move when in home confinement. If they go further they have three minutes to return to the designated zone or they will be returned to prison and ten years added to their sentence. Marnie Watson (Famke Janssen) was married to a violent police officer. She reported his domestic abuse many times but the reports were simply filed away and no action was taken. After years of abuse, she kills him in self defence and ends up in jail.



After having a hard time inside, her last year is to be spent in home confinement. She is fitted with an ankle security bracelet and a distance detector at the top of the first floor. Returning to the home where so much violence occurred is difficult for Marnie. It is not helped by the fact that her assigned case officer is Detective Shanks, her husband's ex-partner and that her neighbours and family have abandoned her. Her mother died trying to get her out of prison and had left the small insurance policy she had to pay off the house so Marnie has somewhere to live when she comes out of prison. Her sister is not impressed.

As she settles in, strange things begin to occur. She cleans the bloodstain off the kitchen wall, only to find it has returned the next day. After a terrifying vision of her dead husband and a large bruise on her face, she realizes that her husband's control and violence has continued beyond the grave. Michael Paré is impressive as Mike Watson, the vengeful ghost of a violent cop.

As a ghost story this really is quite novel.

The sense of claustrophobia is palpable. Here is a woman terrorized by domestic abuse yet her pleas are ignored by police because he is one of their own. Finally she is driven to murder and ends in jail. To add insult to injury she is returned to the scene of the crime and left without support, food or electricity to fend for herself. The psychological aspects of the story are just as interesting as the "supernatural", especially when Shanks, at last, checks her story and finds the "filed" reports about Mike's violence against her.

There were a few things that I felt did not quite work as well as they should. The film placed a strong emphasis on special effects – you see the ghost early on and the attacks on Marnie got pretty "over the top". In any "supernatural" film there is a trade off; show the creature too late and people lose interest, show it too early and you have to go a long way to keep their attention. In my mind the ghost was shown way too early and this really reduced the suspense level of the film and forced the director to use a lot of special effects which became excessive.

Alone, no electricity with a vengeful ghost cop !

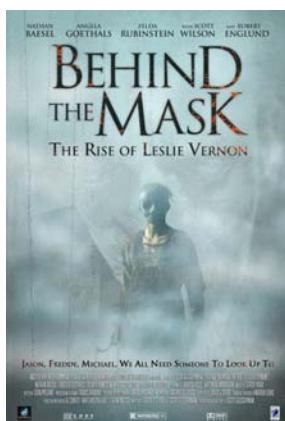


My other misgiving is the ending; it is not giving too much away to say that throwing a wedding ring at a ghost thus causing it to explode into flames and disintegrate is pretty much a let-down. This is a ghost which can materialize, throw furniture and even kill but he is defeated by a wedding ring, come on !

100 Feet is not your run of the mill ghost story. It does have an inventive plot, superior acting and some nice special effects. It will hold your interest and make you jump off your seat at regular intervals – however, it could have been better if the ending and directing had been refined a bit more.

**Behind the Mask
The Rise of Leslie
Vernon
R1 DVD
Starz Entertainment**

Behind the Mask is a startling, inventive and amusing look at the slasher genre. It is a real gem written with dark sense of humour and more than a splash of gore. The film opens as a pseudo documentary discussing the lives of some of the most prolific serial killers. In this story, serial killing is a life choice, even a career and Jason Voorhees, Michael Myers and Freddie Krueger are real and successful examples of the trade. Leslie Vernon aims to join their ranks and has decided to allow a television crew to document his developing career. He introduces them to his truly disconcerting mentor who laments the old



Documentary meets Slasher in the innovative *Behind the Mask*..



days when the numbers of kills were more important than the preparation.

Television news reporter Taylor Gentry follows him as he outlines the process of becoming a serial killer, the nature of his obsession and the psychology involved in his craft. The reflections on the Freudian symbolism involved in the staging of a killing are amusing to say the least.



As Taylor documents his life, she begins to realize that this is far more real than she first considered. This is not a young geek obsessed with fictional killers, but a real apprentice killer preparing carefully for his life work. He has spent years developing his final act including setting up a psychiatrist (Robert Englund) to be his Ahab, that's serial killer trade talk for nemesis.

He works out, developing his cardio for long runs when undertaking slasher activity and taps into a local myth about Leslie Vernon to develop a unique killing event. He prepares a property with sealed windows, doctored weapons and electrics that he can easily turn off. He has cut down trees, mapped out the house and carefully checked for any risks of his victims escaping.

He has assumed the identity of Leslie Vernon, a young boy who was thrown to his death by a violent mob after slaughtering his abusive parents. He expands the legend by planting news articles in the local library connecting the Vernon family to a local girl. This creates a mood around the property and hence attracts a group of young teens to come there to party for the night, when they arrive he is prepared.

Of course, the film crew get cold feet. They realize they are actually accessories to a potential mass murder and try and warn the teens. However, our killer has anticipated this move and they are actually part of the game. It seems that his target was not the young,

innocent fast-food girl he led them to believe he was stalking, but Taylor herself- she is to be the survivor chick.

What I especially like is the movement between genres. At various stages of the film, the cinematography moves from handheld to super 16 and you know you are now seeing Vernon at work rather than simply in the doco. This movement between pseudo documentary and slasher makes the film a truly intriguing cinematic experience offering a surprisingly complex horror film.

It also work to build the suspense of the film until finally the killings begins.

For a while you wonder if the killer is just all talk and taking the film crew for a complex psychological ride, but slowly he begins to creep you out more and more as his carefully planned killing spree nears maturation. When the killing does start the film quickly moves from doco and psychological thriller into an impressive slasher horror.

Behind the Mask is a great new take on the serial killer and slasher genre. You will be intrigued its plot, fascinated by its characters and on the edge of your seat as the blood starts running..

Big Game
Suspense Horror Drama
Reef Pictures
Peacock Films Pty Ltd
R4

Reviewer:
Bob Estreich

Sully is a psychotic redneck criminal who has just been released from prison after serving a couple of years. He is a very bitter man, since his wife and unborn child were killed during his arrest by Reynolds, the



police officer who captured him and shot his wife. He has since been plotting revenge and will take out his vengeance on the officer's teenage daughter Toni.

Toni has her own problems. Her father has become a reclusive alcoholic after the shooting and she is becoming a recluse herself, with few friends. Sully plays on her loneliness to befriend her (she doesn't know his background) and he kidnaps her and a couple of her friends. He, his brother and a rather unwilling and incompetent but easily led friend then take their captives deep into the woods to set a trap for Reynolds. The kids escape and the hunt is on.

Writer / Director Steven Dieveney's script seems fairly conventional, but its execution is superb. C Thomas Howell as Sully is one of the most menacing villains I have seen and his superb acting drives the film. His career as an actor goes back to Spielberg's *E.T.* and he has had parts in a number of major films since then such as Francis Ford Coppola's *The Outsiders*.

His performance particularly lifts this film out of the ordinary homicidal redneck genre, and Howell was an inspired choice for the part. The one pleasant moment in the film is when he befriends Toni, and even then he radiates a sense of evil behind the smile. His two accomplices by contrast are played as comparatively normal people, if a little on the rough side. It is the sheer force of Howell's Sully that drives them into doing what they do.

Haley Webb as Toni is also superb. She plays the part of the depressed schoolgirl suddenly dragged into the reality of an evil world with a skill beyond her years. The other actors played their parts exceptionally well - there really isn't a bad performance in the lot.

Big Game may be an independent low budget film but it has a quality feel to it that lifts it well above the average.

Carina Sanginitto's superb cinematography of the wild and beautiful woods is well worth a mention too, although it is somewhat overtaken by the action and horror.

I would like to say that this is the emerging standard of independent productions, but most have a long way to go to live up to the standard of Big Game.

Boogeyman 3 **Icon** **R4 DVD**

Boogeyman 3 is an interesting evolution of the *Boogeyman* franchise in that it is actually a vast improvement over what has gone before. The original film (2005) was PG rated and tried to use atmosphere instead of violence. The killer was presented as computer generated effects and the whole thing was less than effective. Indeed it flopped so badly it moved straight to DVD.

The concept behind the *Boogeyman* series, however, is still quite solid. Behind our fear of the dark is a real entity which feeds on our suffering and is able to use our belief to become real. *Boogeyman 2* was certainly an improvement over the first and I will not give away the secret of the plot, however, in many ways it betrayed the semi-supernatural basis of the first film but still upped the ante with a more interesting story and lots of action.

Be very afraid of the dark



Boogeyman 3 is really the best of the series. It is surprisingly eerie, has a great boogeyman figure and lots of blood and gore. The concept of the film, once again, follows on from the story of *Boogeyman 2* but adapts it into a new plot. Many patients have died at a local mental institution ending with the death of the head psychiatrist. His daughter is grieving his loss when she finds his diary which documents his experiences at the clinic.

In it he outlines his treatment for belief in the boogeyman which first began as a traditional phobia treatment regime but slowly, over time, began to change as he came to belief in the existence of the boogeyman as a physical manifestation of the darkness within his patients.

As paranoia and fear spread throughout the patients the boogeyman was able to feed on this fear becoming real and killing them all. As his daughter uncovers this revelation she too finds herself being hunted by the boogeyman. It seems the simple belief in the Boogeyman is enough to trigger his presence and the more who believe the more power he gains.

Sarah Morris is a trainee psychiatrist and takes a call from her roommate when manning the university counseling program. Believing her a suicide risk she races to her room only to see the Boogeyman strangling her. However, nobody believes Sarah, and the death is written off as a suicide. However as time progresses the story of the Boogeyman begins to spread, much like an urban legend, throughout Hammond House and students begin to disappear. Could the Boogeyman be reappearing - this time on campus?

This is an interesting horror film which has a different sort of central premise, the power of belief. It takes many of the plot elements from the first two films and turns them into something far more interesting.

There are lots of jumps and scares, all sorts of gore as well as some top horror scenes with bodies in washing machines, walls dripping blood and student massacres. This is certainly the best film of the Franchise.

Dark Paradox All Region NTSC Frontline Films

From Victoria filmmaker Brian Clement ("*Exhumed*", "*The Dead Inside*", "*Meat Market 3*") comes the story of a writer's unwitting discovery of the history and activities a cult in Victoria, Canada that has been engaged in a 60 year effort to open a portal between our world and another, in an attempt to let in a host of inter-dimensional beings.

Once the cult takes hold of the writer he is thrown into a web of horror in which the line between fantasy and reality blurs. Not only is the city is enveloped in chaos but even the fate of the world may be in his hands.

During the "Satanic Panic" craze of the 1980's it was rumoured that Victoria, Canada was one of the centres of Satanism worldwide. While this belief was primarily the ramblings of inane fundamentalists, *Dark Paradox* uses it as the basis to spin a fascinating tale based loosely on the mythos created by H.P. Lovecraft.

The films offers a range of interesting explorations including the locating of the "forbidden book" during World War II, the satanic craze in Victoria (with related police brutalities and riots) and all manner of conspiracies.

There is even some sexy Burlesque thrown in for good measure.

Dark Paradox has clearly been made on a limited budget and could be best described as an indie film. It was an ambitious project tries to combine Sci Fi, Fantasy, Horror and even Film Noir into one package and it has some trouble living up the task.

Don't get me wrong, there are flashes of brilliance throughout the film, some truly innovative plot twists and some occasional scenes of outstanding



cinematography but these do not occur often enough to move it above the low budget niche.

The acting is reasonable for the budget of the film and the special effects need to be accepted within the "indie" genre. They have clearly been produced on limited funds but are effective in terms of the "Lovecraftian" nature of the story.

Criticisms aside, I personally think that if Brian Clement was given even a reasonable budget he could really go places. I am eager to see what he produces in the future. There is clearly great potential here.

The problem here is with funds not with plot or technique. He understands the pulse of horror, mixing Fulci with Lovecraft and a cross genre approach to spinning a story. He has lots and lots of great ideas and his plots are always intriguing.

If you accept the low budget origins of the film and experience *Dark Paradox* for what it is, you will find it a worth a watch.

See reviews of his other films elsewhere in this issue !

Meat Market 3 has also been reviewed in this issue of Synergy, while the other reviews of the other two films, *Exhumed* and *The Dead Inside* will appear in our next issue.

Frontline Films

Web: <http://www.frontlinefilms.net>

Lovecraft, Fulci and some film Noir in *Dark Paradox*



**Friday the 13th
Special Edition 2 Disc
Set
Warner Bros
R4 DVD**

In preparation for the remark of *Friday the 13th*, the original has been re-released in a new special 2 disc edition.



Made in 1980 it was one of the first slashers and really embodied the essence of the new genre. Directed by Sean S. Cunningham, it has all the elements one would hope for in a horror film – an isolated location, sexually active teens, an ominous score, a rainy night and a mad killer !

The story is so simple and yet works so superbly well. In 1957, at Camp Crystal Lake, a young boy named Jason Voorhees drowned while the camp survivors were off having a bit of extra curricula good time. In 1958, two camp counsellors were murdered but the killer is never found. In 1962, fires and bad water thwarted the camp's reopening. The locals steer clear off the place believing it is haunted and Ralph, the local weirdo, believes it is under a death curse.

In 1979, Steve Christy has invested everything he has to make Camp Crystal work. He reopens with the help of some young counsellors who have no idea what awaits them or the history of

Sex always seems to lead to death in these films...



the camp. One of them does not even make it to the door..

As Steve goes into town for the night and a wicked storm brews, the occupants of Camp Crystal are knocked off one by one. The killings are superbly staged – brutal, unexpected and creative. The revelation of the killer is still one of the stranger twists in slasher films and the ending is now a classic !

This re-release from Warner Bros has been superbly restored and offers a choice of Mono, DD 2.00 or DD 5.1. The extras are quite a bonus. On the first disc we have the featurette Return to Crystal Lake: The Making of Friday the 13th.

The second disc is packed with extras including cast interviews, new recollections and memories from the crew, an interview with Sean S Cunningham, a new vignette styled after the original movie and more...

**Laid to Rest
Starz Entertainment
R4 DVD**

Laid to Rest opens with a girl locked in a coffin, she cannot remember her name and does not know where she is. As she breaks her way out of the coffin she finds herself in a funeral home. An elderly man comes to her rescue but as he struggles



with his keys he is gutted and left for dead. His killer is a tall dark man with a chrome skull mask and a very, very large knife. It seems "the girl" has escaped him and so the hunt begins. It seems the killer is known as "Chrome Face" and we have a rather brutal slasher on our hands.

The unnamed girl is picked up by a kind country stranger named Tucker and he takes her home for shelter. Sadly, Chrome Face carries a digital camera on his shoulder and has seen the car they left in. Soon all hell breaks loose and Tucker's wife is sliced and diced and Tucker and the girl are on the run.



Chrome Face has very big knives..

Chrome Face is a superb killer who has an air of mystery about him. His chrome skull mask is unnerving and the associated medical paraphernalia makes him all the darker. He glues the masks directly on his face (which proves to be his undoing later on) and seems to be immune to pain or at least able use his medical knowledge to overcome it.

We learn early on that he is a white middle class professional, probably a doctor and has been killing girls from all over the country. We never know his name or identity. He drives a skull modded car and is meticulous in his work. He works adeptly with knives, cutting, slashing and decapitating. He documents all his achievements on a handheld video system.

The character development is impressive, especially for a slasher film, the unnamed girl played by Bobbi Sue Luthor is excellent and is Kevin Cage as Tucker. While the plot is relatively simple, the relationships developed between the three major characters are believable and there are moments of real emotional intensity. There is also some interesting textures to the plot including the role of the funeral director.

Written and directed by make-up artist Robert Hall, the violence is extreme and the killings are brutal. Many are right in your face and extremely confronting, so be ready to wince and jump at regular intervals.

This is a slasher with a very high body count and yet with a plot and character development as well, an achievement in a genre not known for its depth.

The ending is a bit awkward, while I can appreciate the director wanted to do things a little differently from the traditional "killer versus surviving woman" standoff, it ends up as an anti-climax. Gory, yes; an interesting concept; absolutely, but not totally successful.

The revelations about "the girl" give it some texture but the death of the killer is a letdown. Traditionally only a virgin can be the "survivor girl" but here the director deliberately goes against convention and has the survivor not only discover she was a "working girl" from the killers digital tape recording of her capture but survives.

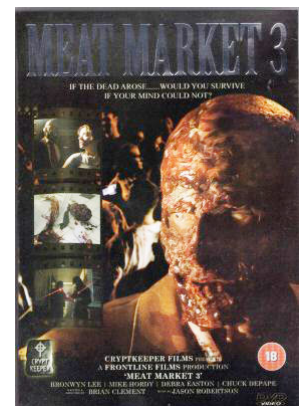
Laid to Rest is an impressive throwback to the great slashers of the Eighties. Brimming with gore, violence and horror it works exceptionally well. It features an intriguing killer who is notable for his brains rather than brawn and this is quite different from your traditional hulk sized serial killers. The use of technology such as mobile phones, GPS, digital cameras and so on all bring the genre up to date and makes him all the more believable and hence unnerving.

While there is a lot of slashing and bashing, it is not just a chase 'n' chop hack-fest, **Laid to Rest** offers enough plot and character to make it a rather good horror showing.

Meat Market 3
Canada
Producer Brian Clement
Frontline Films
Cryptkeeper

Reviewer:
Bob Estreich

At first I thought this was going to be just another low-budget zombie film, but gradually the plot turned and it became something far darker. A young couple is trapped inside a house by the usual slow, shambling zombies. Through a police radio they learn there is another survivor some distance away, and they decide to go there, as there is some strength in numbers against the zombies. Their attempt to escape goes wrong. The young man is bitten and begins to turn,





and only the girl will survive – or will she? Tired, hungry, depressed and near hysteria she catches a moment of sleep.

It is when she awakes that the story starts to go strange. Her husband is alive and well, not a zombie. Soon, however, the zombie scenario returns and she believes she must have been dreaming. As the pressure builds up on her, these strange flashes of normalcy keep coming back until she starts to doubt her sanity.

In one flash her husband is trying to convince her to come and see the doctor, who will make everything alright. In another she is on a stretcher in an ambulance with her husband explaining to the paramedic that she has had these flashes of paranoia before.

The problem is that the extended fights with the zombies seem more real and immediate than the short, vague flashes of a normal life. The surreal is becoming normal, the normal seems surreal. Is she really going mad? Are her zombie periods based on memories from old films? Is she suffering from hallucinations from some sort of germ warfare?

The other survivor on the radio mentions that there has been talk of “something to do with satellites”. Why is the sky blacked out, even in the middle of the day?

The flashes come faster and faster, the zombie situation goes from bad to worse. Only at the very end do we find out what’s going on.

Without the psychological aspect this would indeed be just another zombie film, like so many we have seen before. It is the very conventionality of the zombies that makes them so believable – they are exactly the kind of zombies that

everyone has seen in films. It is this familiarity that makes the “normal” flashes so abnormal by contrast and provides the inner tension in the film.

For a low budget independent, this is a very skilfully made film. The plot is different, the actors are convincing, the makeup and action scenes are better than average. There is enough gore to satisfy any zombie fan, but the film does not dwell on it. The careful cinematography goes a long way towards creating the surreal atmosphere of the “normal” parts.

Brian Clement has done a really good job on this film, and if zombies are your style

I recommend this one to you..

Nightmare Castle Severin Films R1 DVD

Nightmare Castle is considered by many to be the most atmospheric gothic horror film ever. Yet surprisingly it has had no proper release.

For years it has circulated in vastly inferior edited copies (on both Video and DVD) called by all sorts of unusual names ranging from *Lovers from Beyond The Tomb* to *The Night of The Doomed*.

It is only in 2009 that finally *Nightmare Castle* has received the respect it deserves in an optimum release – Severin has done it again offering us a restored, remastered and uncut edition of another important film.

We are not just dealing with an uncensored edition, but one that has been masterfully restored and looks as close to perfect as they can get it. The film is presented in its original 1.66:1 wide-screen ratio with anamorphic enhancement. The sound is a very clear mono English dub.

Nightmare Castle (aka *Gli amanti d'oltretomba*) dates from 1965 and is a real treat for those wanting a little more from their horror.



This is a moody, eerie gothic tale offering torture, medical experimentation, mad scientists, revenge, murder, ghosts and sex. It has a superb score by Ennio Morricone which keeps you enveloped in suspense from beginning to end.

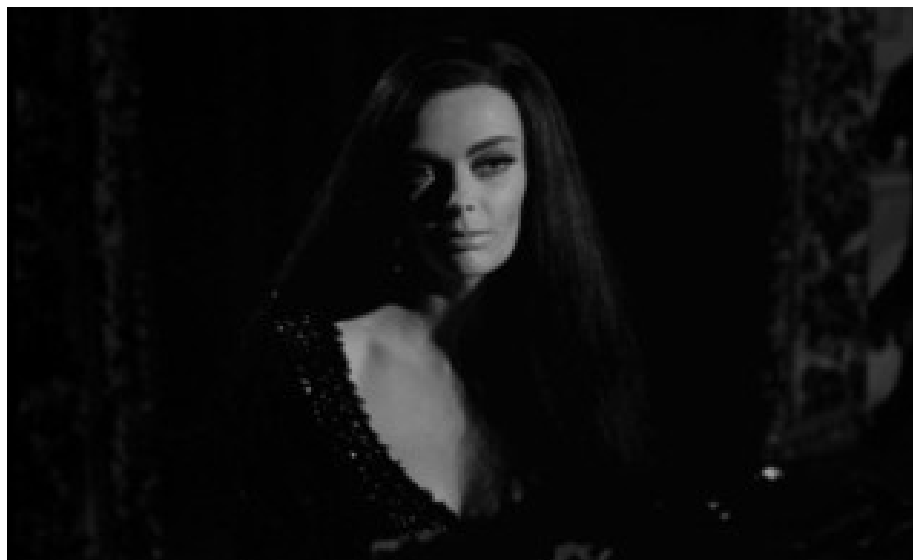
Barbara Steele delivers offers us two outstanding performances as Muriel and Jenny. Muriel, the dark haired wife of Dr. Stephen Arrowsmith is sick of her cold and cruel husband and when she believes he is away on a trip of Edinburgh once again slips out to the greenhouse for some "time with the gardener". However, this time her husband is hiding outside with a riding crop !

Arrowsmith has his maid Solange spying on his wife and he catches her "in flagrante delicto". Rather than killing them (and this is where it gets nice and kinky), he tortures them in every way possible, then electrocutes them both, cutting out their hearts while cremating the rest of their bodies ! He has drained the blood from his wife and used it as part of a youth drug to change Solange from an ugly old maid into a young beauty.

Arrowsmith finds that Muriel has changed her will and left her estate to her mad sister Jenny. Accordingly, he quickly marries the mentally unstable but beautiful young girl with the aim of having her committed to an Asylum and taking hold of the estate and holdings.

Jenny looks the splitting image of Muriel, not surprising since Barbara Steel plays both roles ! At first they plan to drug Jenny to trigger her madness to returns, but she begins to hallucinate all by herself. Soon Arrowsmith and So-

Barbara Steele as Muriel



Death is not enough for these adulterous lovers

lange, however, become worried as the hallucinations seem to involve memories which only Muriel could have.

Things go from bad to worse as Jenny becomes periodically possessed by Muriel's spirit and begins to take revenge. Add to this that the fact that the strange medical experiments undertaken by Arrowsmith are no longer keeping Solange young and beautiful and you get the complexity of this fascinatingly convoluted tale. Running at 104 minutes it offers a intricate tale of sex, violence, ghosts and revenge, all presented in the subtle tones of black and white.

The cinematography is excellent with so many mood creating elements you regularly want to stop the DVD just to look at all the details of a given scene.

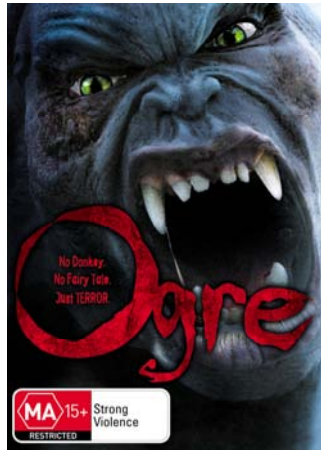
The extras on *Nightmare Castle* are also memorable. We begin with "Barbara Steele In Conversation" where Barbara, still stunning and marvellously sophisticated, summarizes her amazing career in around half an hour !

Then we have director Mario Caiano interviewed in "Black, White, And Red", there are interesting discussions on the origins of the film and of course some reflections on his career as well. There are also two trailers covering the US and UK releases of the film.

Severin Films
<http://www.severin-films.com>

Ogre Icon Entertainment R4 DVD

Ogre is an interesting dark fantasy tale which is reminiscent of the old midnight monster movies. It has a quirky plot, a great monster and lots of cheesy special effects.



The story focuses on the town of Elmsford which is caught in a time warp. While we are living in the modern world, Elmsford is locked in a pact with an Ogre which keeps it suspended in the past. 250 years ago the township's warlock made a deal with dark forces to stop the effects of a deadly plague. To do so all the diseases of the town were transformed into a malevolent beast: the ogre.

To sustain the pact the people of the township become immortal, cannot reproduce and are required to sacrifice one villager a year to keep the Ogre fed. The ritual sacrifice is completed at winter each year and is under the control of the warlock who is also the town magistrate.

The townspeople's are being to notice that the chosen sacrifice is always someone who has questioned the magistrates authority and there is growing discontent.

Rumors of this "town out of time" circulate via the internet and a history geek collects all the rumours together and convinces a group of

Gotta love that Ogre !



teens to go on an expedition to find the missing town.

Inevitably one of them commits the faux pas of unlocking the Ogres pentagram secured tomb and all hell breaks loose. Two of the youngsters are killed by the Ogre and the others are captured by the township.

The townships discontent turns to open rebellion when one of the outsiders is chosen to be the sacrifice. When the warlock's daughter steals his spellbook, she finds that her father created the disease as part of a power struggle to become mayor.

However when the spell got out of control and infected her he manipulated the townspeople into the pact with the Ogre to keep her alive. Since that time her father has literally become the dictator of the township with total control over life and death.

Now his daughter wants to reverse the pact that created the Ogre and set the town's people free, at whatever cost to herself.

This is superb midnight monster entertainment. The ogre is just so utterly over the top - a huge, lumbering CGI creature of outrageous appearance, that he takes centre stage throughout the whole film. *Ogre* has received some bad reviews but I think this is because too many reviewers have interpreted this as a horror film rather than the dark fantasy that it is intended to be.

Ogre is really a scary fairy tale for adults, a medieval legend set in the woods with a monster, scared locals, a warlock and a spellbook. When you watch *Ogre* from this perspective it becomes great fun.

The way in which it intertwines what is essentially an old world fantasy with a modern story of teens lost in the woods is rather inventive.

While the acting, especially by the modern teens is a bit wooden, overall it is a very successful and interesting dark fantasy film.

Room 205 Beyond Home Entertainment R4 DVD

Room 205 could be as easily called "the university where the students are worse than the ghosts!" *Room 205* is a Danish ghost tale (aka as *Kollegiet*), it was directed by

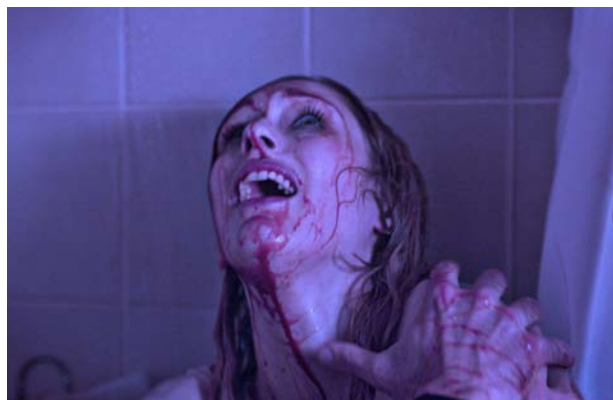


Martin Barnewitz from an impressive story by Jannik Tai Mosholt. While it has a strong feel of *The Grudge*, *The Ring* and other films in the Japanese Horror tradition, it has more European style visuals and is strongly character driven. Indeed, the strength of the characters is what drives this film and this takes what could be seen as an average ghost tale to a different level.

It is also these characters which make the revenge of the ghost seem somewhat pale compared to the viciousness of their human counterparts. The look of the film, especially in the first half as Katrine gets settled into the dorm, reminds me of the atmosphere of the studio in *Suspiria* by Dario Argento. While clearly influenced by both J-Horror and Italian horror, it is a not by any means a slavish copy.

Katrine lives with an overprotective father, who is even more concerned about her health since the suicide of her mentally disturbed mother. Under some pressure her father agrees to allow

J-Horror meets Euro Film Style



her to attend university to study English and she moves into a dorm in Copenhagen.

The dorm is a quirky place with rather nasty fellow students including Sanne, the bitch, Rolf, the outcast (who leaves soon after she arrives) and Lukas, the love machine who seduces all the new girls then leaves them. However, there is more to the dorm than meets the eye.

There is an urban legend about a girl who died in the bathroom of room 205 and the student's idea of "dorm initiation" is to scare the new occupant of the dorms at their annual party. They duplicate the tale of the death of the girl after encouraging the new student to take drugs at the party.

This year, however, something is amiss. It seems the story is based on a real event when a girl was gang raped some twenty years before and left for dead in the same room. Katrine's melancholia somehow taps into this girls wandering spirit and she begins to influence the present.

Room 205 plays on the interesting European folk notion that mirrors are the gateway to the dead and since the dorm is filled with mirrors they carry the memories of souls that have gone before, some "warm and fuzzy", many not so nice.

As Katrine is put under more pressure, the ghost begins to deal with those who are tormenting her. While the film is character driven, the gore in the second half of the film is impressive as each of the "dorm bullies" are slaughtered in new and innovative ways from shards to glass to a lift.

While the plot isn't especially innovative, the cross cultural mix of

Japanese ghost story with its typical revenge motif and European cinematography with strong characters and social message make it a highly successful horror film. The acting is solid, Neel Rønholt who plays Katrine is especially impressive.

Room 205 as presented by Beyond Home Entertainment is in Danish with clear sub-titles, I am very pleased it is not dubbed. The picture is clear with an emphasis on dark palettes while in the dorm and very bright during the day time. This creates a very dream like quality to the film which is very atmospheric. The use of very simple cinematic tricks such as power outages, speeding up of the night sky, reflections in mirrors and so on all work to create an incredible feeling of suspense.

This is very successful horror film which creates a great ambient mood while offering solid characters, a reasonable plot and some excellent scares.

Run Bitch Run Freakshow Entertainment R1 DVD

Run Bitch Run is a marvellous celebration of exploitation and shock cinema. Granted, some will find it offensive and shocking, but I loved it !! It is a return to the exploitation films of the Seventies and Eighties yet it does so with a professionalism and style that is truly outstanding. It combines the rape revenge motif of such films as *Ms.45* and *I Spit on your Grave* with all the excesses of exploitation cinema with a solid dash of "nunsplotation" thrown in for good measure.

The cinematography, score, acting and plot are way above what you would expect from exploitation cinema; it is visually arresting, has a kick-ass score and a plot to die for. *Run Bitch Run* is the brutally dark comic tale of two Catholic schoolgirls – Catherine and Rebecca. They have been sent by their girl's school on a mission to sell Bibles door-to-door. Catherine is devout and takes her work seriously; Rebecca



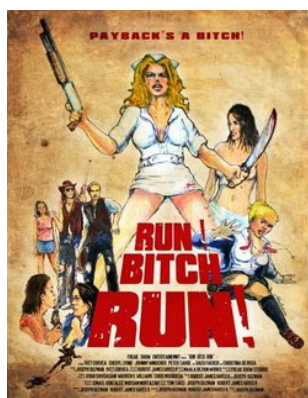
Don't ever call Carla a whore !

wants something more exciting; she has no idea what she is in for.

As they work their way town to town they decide to go to Moseley to continue their work. Moseley is a strange backward little town filled with obnoxious children hawking oranges and old woman who use shotguns to get missionaries off their property. They struggle on trying to sell their Bibles with little success, even succeeding in getting their money stolen. Soon they come across the wrong house at the wrong time.

As the tale of innocent young catholic schoolgirls selling Bibles, getting naked and trying to look demure with flashes of suppressed desire unfolds, we cut to scenes of the criminal clan of Lobo. Lobo runs a sex and dope operation and when things go wrong is happy to use maximum violence to solve the problem. His team includes Carla, a wild bi-sexual "companion", who'll kill any John who dares call her a whore and poor stuttering Clint, who likes to watch nunsplotation porn while screwing as many of the girls as he can. As the story of Lobo's clan unfolds we are treated to loads of sex, nudity and fun and games – who would think you could use a "plumbers friend" that way ?

These two worlds collide as the girls knock on door of Lobo's den trying to sell their religious wares. At the same time Lobo shoots one of his whores for stealing some smack and her head explodes over the window. At first Clint thinks this is one of his nun movies, here are two young catholic schoolgirls at the door. Soon he realizes they are all too real and have witnessed Lobo dispatching one of his girls.



Catherine and Rebecca are dragged inside and the games begin. Rebecca is forced to indulge in a little pussy licking, since Carla is rather horny and then to play Russian roulette. Sadly she loses and her body is sold along with the girl's car to a local who can use her fresh flesh for some necrophilic good times.

Catherine is taken to the wilds outside town to play "Run Bitch Run". She must somehow escape Lobo and Clint who are hunting her down for a rape and kill game. Lobo catches her and has his fun, but when Clint finds her, he has also his way but since she falls down an embankment presumes she is dead and leaves without cutting her throat. A bad move for lobo's crew !

She comes to the next day, naked, very sore and lost in the woods. She wanders lost to the sounds of soft of soft porn lounge music and wakes up in a local hospital primed and ready for revenge. The schoolgirl innocent has now become an avenging angel. Look out – the blood and guts will now begin to flow and you will be shocked how far she will go to get her revenge.

Run Bitch Run has taken exploitation cinema and made it an art form. What more could one ask for ? Gore, guns, drugs, sex, rape, inferred necrophilia, forced pussy licking, lesbianism, Catholic schoolgirls, rape and revenge, anal rape with a machete and lots more. This is a film which will shock and dismay the more reserved among us and thrill the rest !

The Satanic Sluts III Scandalized Redemption R0 PAL

From the headlines to you bedroom, the Satanic Sluts revel in sex, fetish and having a damn good time. When Voluptua aka Georgina Baillie, granddaughter of veteran actor Andrew Sachs, burlesque dancer and goth Satanic Slut became the focus of the Russell Brand scandal at the BBC it seemed the right time to explore the world of scandalous headlines and dirty tabloid headlines.

Satanic Sluts is a series which explores a range of fetish, lesbian and goth/dark fantasies via a sequence of dialogue free vignettes. These are



Voluptua aka Georgina Baillie

always inventive, original and sizzling. In volume III the vignettes are related via ridiculous headings from various UK scandal rags which are then reinvented in the most erotic manner possible.

Stories involve lesbian reporters, vampire cults and sacrifices, extra terrestrial UFO sex encounters, naughty and sleazy models, sex at work and lots and lots more.

The emphasis is on fetish with a little more sex on show than in parts I and II (not that anyone minds). Each of the scenes is a fascinating "set piece" exploring a certain theme accompanied with outfits which match the related fetish, in various of *Satanic Sluts* DVDs these have ranged from authoritarian outfits to nurses, leather to latex. The sheer power of the imagery in this series is startling and erotic, while it may shock some, it will arouse most.

Nigel Wingrove has been making fetish films for many years as well as pushing the boundaries of censorship. Beginning with *Visions of Ecstasy*, which was a homage to St Theresa of Avila's reveries of ravishment by Christ which was banned by the BBFC for blasphemy, Wingrove went on to found Redemption films, fight censorship and make sleaze and euro cult an celebrated taste. The *Satanic Sluts* series have united so many of his obsessions into a single series which, due to the joys of DVD, can be celebrated by all !

Web: <http://salvation-films.com/>



The Grudge 3 Roadshow R4 DVD

The belief in the vengeful dead is very significant to most "traditional" cultures with all manner of rites used to protect the living from their power. In Buddhism they are known as Hungry hosts and in Asian countries this has spawned a rich tradition of ghost tales. One of the many adaptations of these tales is found in the idea of the cursed place. The legend goes that when someone dies in extreme sorrow or rage, the emotions become embedded in that location. Death and suffering become a part of the locale, absorbing further negative emotions and destroying everything it touches. Once you make contact with it, you cannot escape.

Takashi Shimizu explored this theme in a series of horror films, the first two were direct to video, while the third "*Ju-on: The Grudge*" was such a success it became a major release not only in Japan but worldwide. This was remade as an American film "*The Grudge*" in 2004 which was followed by two sequels, *The Grudge 2* in 2006 and *The Grudge 3* in 2009. While the earlier films were given an M rating in Australia, this received a MA15+ for violence, it is certain more visceral than its predecessors.

The Grudge 3 is an interesting American remake as Takashi Shimizu is still involved and hence it sustains some of the vision and authenticity of the original J Horror films.

In this case Shimizu decided to produce rather

I love the unique look of the ghosts in
J-Horror



than direct and also wanted to explore a new idea, could the curse be stopped. This allowed an expansion of the plot to include a direct Japanese connection, the introduction of a Japanese spirit medium and a rather intriguing Japanese folk exorcism at the climax of the film.

The story focuses on a brother, sister and their disabled sibling living in a Chicago apartment block. Recently it has been beset with disaster as tenants seem to be dying from strange and unexplained causes. The key seems to be a young girl who visited the "cursed" house in Japan and brought back a dark presence to the apartments. Slowly it spread, like a virus, infecting all it touched. A whole family was killed and the boy who survived, Jake, is now in a mental institution. It is with Jake the movie opens.

Soon a young woman arrives from Japan who seems to know the nature of this curse as her sister was the nexus of the events which unfolded in Tokyo. She holds the key to stopping the evil spirit of Kayako but the cost will be great and many will have to die before the ritual will be completed.

This is an interesting expansion of The Grudge story. The characters of the family members in the Chicago apartments are well developed and you feel a strong empathy for their plight, the sick child Rose is especially impressive. The way in which the story is told through the tale of Jake Kimble, who has survived his family's death from Kayako, but knows she is coming for him works well. Adding in the element about the Japanese sister's mother being a spirit medium and hence Kayako becoming an especially powerful and vengeful ghost after death is a good plot development and the folk exorcism at the end is innovative.

All in all, this is a surprisingly effective sequel.

The Shadow Within R4 DVD Peacock Films

The Shadow Within is an intriguing Italian ghost tale by Silvana Zancolo, it has worked its way through various indie film festivals and arrives on DVD via Peacock Films. Maurice Dumont is a young isolated, nine year old boy who lives alone with his ice queen of a mother. He is denied an education (she even burns his school books) and only gets access to medical care when a nurse visits the home.

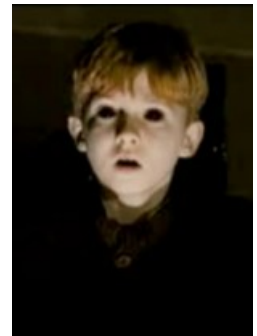
The local town is tradition bound and racked with diphtheria, children are dying and yet the local folk refuse to take advice from the city trained doctor. The fact she is a woman does not help. It seems that no woman can train to be a doctor locally and she needed to travel a long distance to get her qualifications. While most men are at war her husband has stayed behind as the school teacher. This, of course, increases the suspicious nature of the locals and their resentment.

Marie and Maurice live in a house that is decrepit and decayed and they survive on a starvation diet.

While Marie may believe she is doing what is right it seems in the end all she really wants is to protect her property and use her son for cheap labor - she is narrow, vicious and cruel. The comparison between the sensitive, sad,



otherworldly child and the selfish and cruel mother is powerfully made. While you feel some sympathy and perhaps wonder whether her cruelty is called by grief, you cannot bring yourself to excuse it.



The locals are superbly portrayed as dour people who seem to dress in black and be obsessed with death and dying. While their men folk may be away at war, they seem unable to bring themselves to live a normal life or allow their children to have a "childhood". Rather than accepting the death of their children and moving on, they become obsessed with contacting them in the afterlife and keeping them alive via Maurice.

Maurice however is not totally alone; he has the ability to see between the veil of life and death and communicates with Jacques, his deceased brother. Maurice finds the spirit of his brother becoming strong and stronger and more and more difficult to control. His brother not only appears during the day and night but starts to do strange things around the house.

As her grief overwhelms his mother Marie, she falls under the influence of Madame Armand, who is an avid spiritualist. She convinces Marie to use her son to act as a medium to the spirit world. As Jacques increases his influence over Maurice, he comes to the realization that they both desire the same thing: their parents' love. There is one problem; Jacques does not want to return to the living, he wants his parents to join him in death.

Using Maurice as a spirit medium



There is a lot of interest in this film. Granted, the plot is nothing new, but the atmosphere of the film is chilling and the suffocating narrowness of the Marie and the village is palpable. The way she reacts to the local school teacher and doctor is such an embodiment of small mindedness that it makes you cringe. The way in which a tale of the clash between city and village life is intertwined with a ghost tale is intriguing.

The images of dolls, shadows, ghostly images are impressive and create quite a mood; the quality of the stop motion animation should also be noted.

The Signal

2008

USA

Writers and Directors

Dan Bush,

David Bruckner,

Jacob Gentry

R4 DVD

Asylum

Madman Entertainment

Reviewer: Bob Estreich



A strange signal has appeared from nowhere and it is overriding televisions, mobile phones, and any communications device. Its strange distortions seem to react directly with the brain, suppressing normal behaviour and allowing the basic human nature to come through. Without the veneer of civilisation, what comes through is often quite nasty.

Most people affected by the signal quickly turn into homicidal maniacs - others react in different ways depending on how long they are exposed. In less than a day civilisation has broken down.

The film follows Mya, her husband and her lover as they each react to the signal. Mya at first handles the chaos but soon withdraws into fugue. Her husband Lewis has a really dark personality and this comes through in a killing spree. Her lover, Ben, has trouble adjusting but can be as violent as necessary. In a time when bloody murder seems perfectly rational to the murderer, the outcome will not be pretty.

As the signal changes, each person in the city is unsure of their place and indeed who they are, as brain patterns and behaviors become entangled and changed. Hallucinations are common and paranoia is affecting the survivors. It is almost impossible to achieve much character development in such changing circumstances, but a little does sneak through.



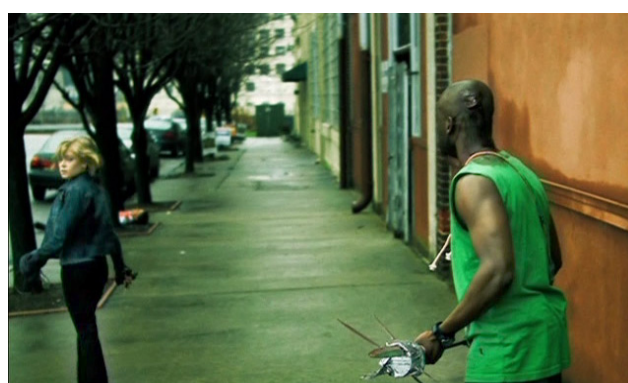
Essentially, though, it is the plot that drives the story forward.

Although there is plenty of blood and gore this is not intended as a splatter movie. It is a psychological drama that explores the depths of the human mind and how it is often barely under control. At which point does self defence become homicide?

Such a film could very easily fall back into splatter, but the fine script and brilliant directing and acting lift it out of the ordinary. What we get is a true suspense and horror film, one with no satisfactory outcome in sight.

There was one particular moment that I liked that provided a short break from the almost non-stop tension. As the three are getting into a car, in the background we see a group of people running past, screaming. They are followed by a maniac wielding a revving chainsaw. Such brief breaks are very few.

All this is achieved on a low budget and from an independent company. There are some shortcomings, but they can easily be overlooked in what is otherwise a really fine film. Extras include the Directors' commentary, The Making of, a particularly good but deleted scene and the usual stills gallery



Splinter Icon Films R4 DVD

With Hollywood producing more and more horror remakes and sequels, it is always a joy to see an indie low budget horror, especially one with bite. *Splinter* is a gore ridden monster film with a wicked sense of humour, a quirky beginning and some great special effects.

As the film opens you wonder what exactly you are in for, it seems a bit like a crime story even an Italian Giallo. It is a little slow, but it does offer background and character development leading to the heart of the film. Seth and Polly are a yuppie couple, Seth is a biologist by trade, but doesn't actually get out into the wilderness very often. Under pressure from Polly, he agrees to go native for their anniversary, but as tents collapse and a lack of camping knowledge comes to the fore, they decide to retire to a motel for a night for celebratory lovemaking.

Not far behind them are escaped con Dennis and his unstable meth addict girlfriend Lacey. Lacey stands on the side of the road, flailing her arms and looking suitably lost and with typical middle class sympathy Seth and Polly stop to help. Before they know it Dennis has a gun to Polly's head and they are well and truly car-jacked. It seems Dennis and Lacey not only want their vehicle but hope to extract the contents of

Dennis looking for trouble...and finding it !



their bank accounts at the next town. Interesting characters, a bit of violence - it looks like a bit of a nasty crime story so far, but not for long.

Along the way they hit a strange animal which appears to be a very rabid squirrel. However, they are soon to learn that even being rabid would not be so bad compared to the parasite that has invaded the local region. The parasite (which Seth soon analyses with his nerdy science skills) invades the body quickly and within minutes you are some sort of flesh eating urchin or hedgehog. The pathogen is spread by even a minor pin prick and unless you act quick you are history and so are those around you.

The roadkill has destroyed the car's engine and as it splutters and smokes, they pull in at the next service station. Alas, the owner of the station has already been infected and soon it is on for young and old. This unlikely group must band together to fight off the monster and make sure they are not infected along the way.

The monster itself is a real throwback to the creature-features of the Seventies and Eighties, it is a sort of giant urchin thing which spikes and sticks everything it comes across when it is not ripping them up and eating them.

While this may be a low budget film the special effects are impressive, the characters interesting as well as eccentric and the plot unusual enough to keep your interest. There may have been a flood of indie horror films of late but there is lot of innovation in this one and it really does stand out.

The various personal interactions are nicely explored even if the characters are somewhat stereotypical. The nerd versus armed crim who actually has a "heart of gold" is pretty obvious but works well in this context.

There is a black humour running throughout the film and enough blood and guts to keep any gorefiend happy. The scene with a hand chasing them around the gas station is a real show stopper and you will certainly be chilled when the only solution to being infected by a "splinter" is to cut off your own arm with a box cutter !

Splinter is an excellent gore ridden monster horror film and certainly packs a punch. It harkens back to old midnight movies and will more than satisfy the horror film buff who wants something a bit more interesting than mainstream fare.

WORLD CINEMA



Bunny Chow
South Africa
Director John Barker
Global Lens Film
Series
First Run Features
R1 DVD

Reviewer:
Bob Estreich

The Global Film Initiative selects films from around the world each year to tour the U.S. as part of the Global Lens Film Series "to promote cross-cultural understanding". In the past I have found their films to be interesting because of the problems of the different cultures and their ways of handling them.

Three friends in Johannesburg are having the usual young male troubles with their lives, their girlfriends, and in this case, with a career in standup comedy. They decide that their best bet is to take a break and go to the OppiKoppi rock festival. Along the way they will stop at a gig their manager has arranged at a local pub.

It starts to go wrong when they find that the planned gig isn't until the next week. It gets worse when Kagi, the oversexed one of the party, tries it on with the pub owner's wife and nearly gets shot. At the rock festival where they have another gig lined up, one is arrested for trying to smuggle in drugs, but is released by a friendly security guard who knows one of the comedians.

It seems things are the same around the world, if the boys' advice to each other is anything to go by. If your girlfriend rings you on your mobile, don't answer, otherwise you'll be answering to her for the rest of your life. "If you wanna get laid, dude, alcohol is sex's best friend I'm telling you."

Back at home, Kagi's girlfriend has discovered she is pregnant and decides to go to OppiKoppi to break the news to him. She discovers



her boyfriend kissing another girl. After the inevitable fight, one of Kagi's friends tells him it was bound to happen because of his past string of girlfriends, mistresses and casual sex partners. There is nearly another fight, but friendship wins out and they all settle down. Kagi reveals that he loves his girlfriend, but he is going to have a hard job winning her back.

Dave, the shy one of the group and the least successful comedian, is getting on very well with a girl he has met who turns out to be one of the festival organisers. Joey is hallucinating from drugs supplied by a friend who "doesn't do drugs".

There will be a whole string of problems to sort out when they get back to Johannesburg.

The film is not particularly funny considering that the actors are apparently among South Africa's leading standup comics. Nor is it a drama, or is it that overused "coming of age" type of film. It is just a good film about a bunch of good friends doing their best for each other. As we follow them through the film we see that, in spite of the multicultural South African background, they are just a bunch of young guys having young-guy-type problems.

If there is one jarring note in the film, it is the use of American slang like "bro". The characters could have been a little better developed, and the script tightened up a bit, but overall the film is fun and quite enjoyable.

And incidentally *Bunny Chow* is apparently a heavily stuffed hot sandwich, a local favourite.

English and Afrikaans, subtitled in clear white on black

First Run Features
Web: <http://www.firstrunfeatures.com>

Little Otik Siren Visual R4 DVD

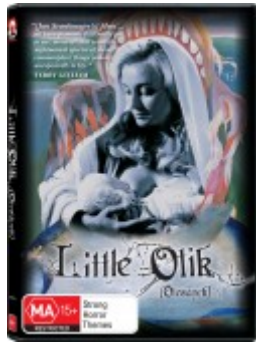
Little Otik (*Olesanek*) is another weird and wonderful film from Jan Svankmajer. Svankmajer is a well known Czech puppeteer and animator who came to international notice with such well received but decidedly odd films as *Faust* and *Alice*. His live action films are a quirky mixture of animation, cartoons, puppetry as well as wonderfully perverse characters. In his *Conspirators of Pleasure* (1996) Svankmajer explored the world of sex and fetish, while in *Little Otik* (2001) he has decided to focus on the world of the dysfunctional family.

Little Otik is based on a Czech fairy tale about a childless couple who in desperation adopt a tree stump that looks like a baby. However, Svankmajer gives the tale a "Freudian" twist. The wife is so utterly psychologically devastated by her infertility that she projects all of her desires into the tree stump and it comes to life. There are so many levels on which this tale operates; it is a black comedy, a folk/fairy story, a strange and perverse reflection on dysfunctional families and a horror story.

The major theme is the madness and obsession of Bozena Horak who in so desperately wanting a child triggers disaster. Not only does the stump come to life but it grows larger and larger and consumes everything in its way, literally. The animation is superbly done; a giant tree stump with teeth eating a cat, a postman and a



A very strange baby indeed..



s o c i a l worker is a sight to see. Of course this has a strongly allegorical meaning about the ever consuming nature of parenthood and the psychopathology of those obsessed with

the need to have a child at whatever cost.

One of the more interesting motifs is the way in which Svankmajer causes us to reflect on how parents project their unconscious drives and desires into their children. Of course it is easy to appreciate that a parent may want their child to have the education they did not have or a job better than the one they are stuck in.

But Svankmajer wants us to consider how so many of the parent's prejudices, tastes and likes and dislikes are conditioned into their child's psyche. This is powerfully presented in *Little Otik* who becomes the embodiment of his mother's madness, hatred and fear.

Svankmajer walks a thin line between absurdity and madness, it would have been too easy for this film to end up like a farce. At first you laugh when Bozena starts powdering the "stump baby" or worse, sewing nine pillows to fake her pregnancy. But soon she becomes so disturbed the humour becomes very dark and you feel very uncomfortable with the dysfunctional nature of the world she is creating.

The madness of the world around the Horak family is further reinforced by the characters around them who all have their own little perversions. Each of these are presented in Svankmajer's unique style. For example, the old man's desire for the underage Alzbetka is presented in a close-up of his crotch, where the buttons pop open and a hand creeps out trying to grab her !

As with many of Svankmajer live action films there is an obsession with the close up. Food is presented in such a way that it is sickening real and in early stages of the film every possible image of reproduction is presented. Since Bozena is trying to get pregnant we are presented with constantly encoded references to their predicament from a finger slowly drilling into the soil and planting a seed to highly sexualized images of chocolate. It is amazing how sexually explicit a Svankmajer film can be without actually showing anything that is really sexual at all.

The traditional story is told in cartoon style as Alzbetka reads it in a book of Czech fairy tales.

The strange mixture of cartoons, animations, puppetry and live action in *Little Otik* creates a very unusual cinematic experience - one that will not be easily forgotten.

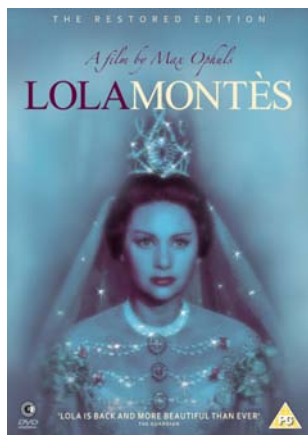
Lola Montes
Max Ophuls
The Restored
Edition
Second Sight
R2 DVD

*French Language
with clear subtitles*

Lola Montes is an extravagant and masterful film made by Max Ophuls in 1955. Based on the real life of Lola Montez, courtesan, femme fatale and liberated woman, it achieved infamy when released in 1955 and was a box office failure. The public were not ready for the unique spectacle Ophuls had prepared for them. Ophuls died two years later engaged in an ongoing battle with the film's producers to regain control of his masterpiece. After his death a savagely butchered version was in circulation for many years - cut, edited and censored, it was never fully appreciated.

It is amazing how long it can take for a director's ideal to be realized. Through the efforts of Andrew Sarris of the *Village Voice* a partially restored version of the film was shown at the New York Film Festival in 1963. However, only in 2009 has the director's original vision been brought to the scene and what a vision it is ! The restoration work took over 2 years and was presented at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival where it was rapturously received. This is a work of breathtaking beauty.

The film centres on the life of Lola Montes, "The Most Scandalous Woman in the World." She was the mistress of Franz Liszt and King Ludwig of Bavaria, of students and artists, of soldiers and ringmasters. She learnt young the power of



The beautiful Martine Carol plays
Lola Montes



her sex and used it for her benefit and ultimately to her loss. She was loved by many but never trusted love. Whenever she travelled in a carriage with a lover, she paid to have her own carriage follow them so she always had a means of escape. Her life was "larger than life" and hence Ophuls presents it via the most larger than life medium that can be imaged, the circus.

Peter Ustinov, the ringmaster, narrates her past as Lola revolves on a platform. She is the centre of the circus, the nexus of a true spectacle. In many ways she is like a caged and dangerous animal; intriguing and beautiful, a prisoner never the less, Ustinov regularly cracks his whip to co-ordinate the show as though to emphasize the "anima" connotations of her appearance.

The circus is garish, colourful and gaudy, filled with clowns, dwarfs and the excesses of the "sideshow", which mirror the excesses of her life. It provides a handle for her story to be told. At first it is presented by astounding sets, dances, show pieces and narrated tales, but these fade into a sequence of flashbacks which tell the pertinent tales of her childhood, lovers and later life. It is quite a daring work of cinema and visually arresting. The sets of the circus are absolutely astounding – beautiful, seductive and yet at the same time with an element of melancholy. It is also quite shocking, even with the age of the film, it presents a potent image of a woman who has used the only means at her disposal to achieve a degree of independence and yet been destroyed by it.

One cannot think of a more powerful image of objectification, this is a woman on display; she has become an "object" of the sideshow. At the climax of the show, customers can even pay a dollar to kiss her hand or touch her side.

The acting is superb, Ustinov as a slimy nickel-and-dime ringmaster is marvelous and Martine Carol as Lola is superb as the fading, yet dignified beauty. The cinematography is extremely inventive and even though this was a film made in 1955 it is still visually innovative, visually arresting and filled with nuance and pathos. After so many years it is now restored to its full length of 110 minutes.

Extras include Working with Max Ophus, a new seventy minute documentary and a commentary by Susan White (author of *The Cinema of Max Ophuls*).

The Warlords Anchor Bay R4 DVD

In Mandarin with
sub-titles.

The Warlords is an epic Chinese historical drama, it brings together a truly momentous tale of war and ambition with a personal exploration of love, friendship and brotherhood. The sheer beauty of the cinematography is breathtaking and is only matched with what is probably one of the better soundtracks I have heard in quite a while. At the same time there is always a sense with Chinese historical epics that the "chief censor" has been watching and this makes some facets of the film seem unduly tame, even perhaps a little clichéd. I wonder what *Warlords*, for example, would be like if produced in a country where the film industry has true free creative license. This is not a criticism of the film per se; it is an entertaining film with an intense and powerful plot and superb vistas of soldiers and war, but simply a reflection of how much more this film could have been.

The Warlords takes place in Nineteenth century Imperial China, where Taiping rebels, have captured half of the country, operating from bases in Nanking and Suzhou. The major opposition is the Imperial Ching Army, but it is compromised by corruption. It has been defeated so many times that in an attempt to bolster ranks anyone

Er-Hu, Zhang and Pang



can join and its ranks have swelled with criminals and thugs. One of the worst is General Ho who uses the war to create opportunities for himself and is not above sacrificing Ching soldiers if it is for his own benefit.

General Pang Qingyun has just survived a battle against the Taiping rebels, but all of his army have been killed due to the treachery of General Ho. Hiding among the corpses, he is able to make it to the next village and collapses in an abandoned house where a young beautiful lady, Lian cleans his wounds and offers him various forms of amorous nourishment to get him back on his feet. When Pang awakens she is gone and so he continues to the next village.

Soon he meets a group of bandits and after they are attacked by Ho's men, he encourages them to join under him with the Ching army. Soon Er-Hu, Zhang and Pang take a blood oath of brotherhood and lead their bandit army into the Imperial Ching forces. To his discomfort he realizes that Lian is the wife of Er-Hu and the major romantic sub plot begins to unfold.

As the bandits join the Ching forces and go into to battle under Pang they soon learn what it is like to be real soldiers. Soon their loyalties are put to the test as the true cost of battle becomes all too obvious.

This is a complex and fascinating tale weaving romance, loyalty and betrayal into a historical war drama. The battle scenes are quite staggering and when matched with martial arts are really quite overwhelming. While CGI have been used in many scenes it is hard to see where special effects begin and live action ends and this is a impressive achievement. In many recent Chinese historical dramas the CGI has not been up to scratch, but here it is magnificent.

The Warlords is an amazing film, packed with action, drama, love and loss. It is big on the epic and while based on historical events has been packaged in a way to reach the largest possible market. This makes it enjoyable and entertaining, but I still feel it lacks texture and nuance. If I was to describe the sense I get from this film it would be in the word "safe", it doesn't break any new ground or take any risks. This does not make it unsuccessful, but simply means that it is less than it could be. I came away have enjoyed the spectacular but ultimately wishing for more substance.



THINKING TIME !

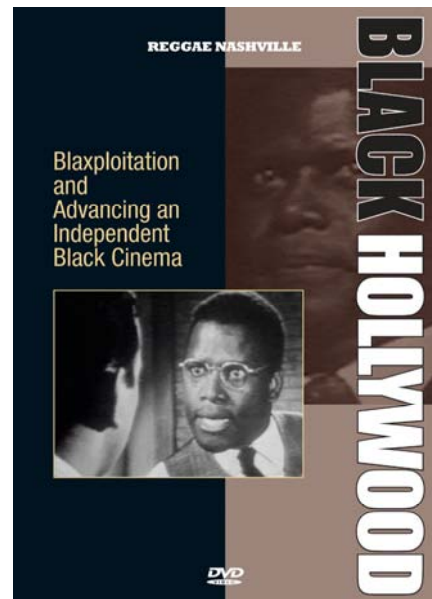
Black Hollywood
Blaxploitation and Advancing an
Independent Black Cinema
Screen Edge
MVDVisual
Region Free DVD
Web: <http://mvdb2b.com/>

Black Hollywood is an intelligent, well informed and entertaining look at both Blaxploitation and Black cinema in general. Rather than simply extolling the "cult" value of Blaxploitation films, it explores the economical, sociological and cultural significance of such films in terms of the development of Black Cinema. It examines the way in which Hollywood used Blaxploitation (and films aimed at other minorities) to overcome a lack of success with mainstream audiences and then when it was back on its feet, left behind those it had seemingly exploited.

It is a perceptive documentary deliberately allowing different "voices" from within the Black community to discuss their experience and perceptions of Hollywood. These range from the bitter and furious to the pragmatic; from perceptions of racism to a more "economic" view of how Hollywood operates. Some have more confidence about the future than others, but all are willing to share their experiences.

Shot entirely on location in Hollywood in 1984, this documentary is still extremely relevant, especially with the current interest in Blaxploitation titles.

It has many rare interviews, but is not just made up of "talking heads", it includes comedy routines, lots of



action packed movie clips and some excellent commentary.

In a very wide reaching presentation Diahnne Abbott, Rosalind Cash and Alfre Woodard talk about negative stereotyping. While Jim Brown, Vonetta McGee and D'Urville Martin come up with alternative solutions to the one-way-street that was "blaxploitation" and discuss new ways of advancing an independent black cinema. There is a rare interview with Lorenzo Tucker, the Black Valentino, about his career with Oscar Micheaux and Joel Fluellen and Vincent Tubbs tell memorable stories of what life was like for the few blacks working in Hollywood in the 50s and 60s.

This is a comprehensive documentary which balances coverage of Blaxploitation with discussions of Black Cinema in general and the politics of race and the financial mechanics of Hollywood. It is honest, at times biting, at other times amusing, but always informative and entertaining.



**Deflating the Elephant:
Framed Messages behind Conservative
Dialogue
Cinema Libre Studio
R1 DVD**

Narrated by Academy Award winning actor and political activist Sean Penn, this is a fascinating exploration of the use and misuse of language. So often documentaries on politics focus on specific social issues and or events within the political arena. Most do not examine the way in which language is manipulated to get the required result.

So often the simple use of terms such as "free market," "tax relief," "pro life" and "war on terror" are actually used to deflect real debate and reinforce prejudice. In the US (and this doco focuses on some 35 years of US political discourse), the conservative side of politics has spent millions of dollars to encode their own interpretation of language on the public so that in any debate the simple use of certain terms automatically illicit opinions that support conservative thinking and at times downright prejudice.

For example, the far right in American has slowly conditioned the public to associate certain ideas when they hear the term "Gay Marriage". These ideas are always negative and include such concepts as the destruction of the traditional family (whatever that is), destroying social cohesion and curtailing the rights of religious people to practise their faith. This, of course, deliberately obscures the reality of equal rights for all and stopping religious minorities enforcing their prejudices on the larger community.

This work is based on University of California

Professor George Lakoff



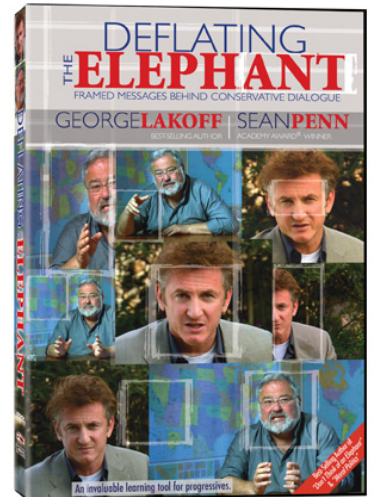
Professor George Lakoff's theories on language and "framing" and is comprehensive and highly informative. The title comes from Lakoff's bestselling book *Don't think of an elephant*.

Lakoff is considered one of America's foremost cognitive linguists and he offers a fascinating journey into how ideas can be conditioned by language and how the public is easily manipulated by conservatives.

He explains in easy to understand terms what "framing" is and how it is used to shape ideology, behaviour and thought. Sadly it is a strategy that has worked throughout the world by a diverse spectrum of conservative movements from family value patriots to the far right.

It is so easy to see framing in action through the Australian experience of thirteen years of Prime Minister John Howard and appreciate how he controlled the debate on so many issues by the flagrant manipulation of language.

You only have to consider his carefully encoded discussions of "queue jumping asylum seekers", "family values" and "Australian values" to see the process in action in an Australian context. While John Howard is thankfully gone, the process still continues today. In Australia all parties seem to revel in manipulating language and public perception.



Lakoff explains how to critically decode the framing strategy, understand how and why it works and defuse its power. He also offers advice on what the progressive movement must do to cut through the propaganda and get some real debate going on significant issues.

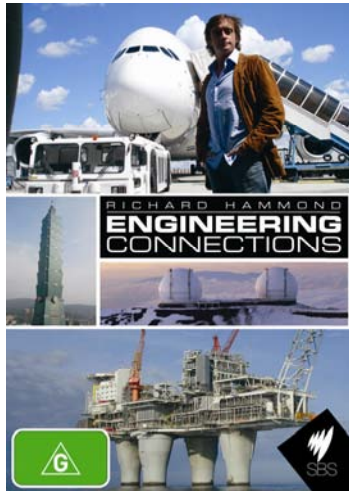
This is quite an extensive examination of this important subject with *Deflating the Elephant* going for over 2 hours. In the current world economic crisis we all need to read "between the lines" and see what the real debate is all about.

**Engineering
Connections
Madman
Entertainment
R4 DVD**

Richard Hammond's *Engineering Connections* is one of the best documentary series I have ever seen and this is no exaggeration. If there was a test to ascertain the documentary with highest concentration of content while still being great entertainment, *Engineering Connections* would win hands down. It is a deceptively simple yet ultimately satisfying package.

Take a piece of technology and use it as a "thematic device" to explore all the different technologies which have been used in its construction. Each technology is examined from historical, scientific and engineering perspectives and to stop our interest flagging include all manner of experiments, many of them of the "mad" *Top Gear* type! They haven't chosen The Hamster for nothing.

By choosing Richard Hammond the producers have really made a superb choice. Rather than having a dry lecture format where facts are



Keck Observatory

pushed down the viewer's throats, we join Richard Hammond on a quest to understand these amazing structures. We participate in the documentary, learning along the way. We are not talked down-to but neither is the content "dumbed down" or reduced to a lowest common denominator as in so many "made for Cable TV" American documentaries. We are challenged to think about all sorts of subjects we would have never considered before while being entertained and even amused.

The structures chosen are: the Airbus, the largest Airliner ever to exist; the Taipei Tower, one of the tallest buildings on Earth; the gigantic Troll A Platform and the strongest telescope ever made, the WM Keck Observatory. Each one of these awe inspiring achievements are used as gateways to explore all sorts of scientific, historical and technological achievements.

The Hamster in the Airbus



If we take the Keck Observatory as an example. As we consider what a masterful achievement this gigantic observatory is, we examine just some of the technological advances which were required to allow its construction. To keep the giant mirror cool requires the expert use of refrigeration, so Hammond introduces us to the history of refrigeration and discusses how it works, including experiments along the way.

Since the mirror is so large (and made up of many small mirrors) they all must stay perfectly aligned, so we are introduced to the Theremin.



Taipei 101 skyscraper

The Theremin was a strange and unusual musical device which was originally devised as a spy gadget but its founder found it more successful as one of the world's first electronic musical instruments.

Since it also sensed disturbances in electrical fields, a refined version is central to the success of the mirror in the Keck observatory sensing even minute variations between the many smaller mirrors which are aligned to make up its surface.

Of course with a mirror of such size it must be kept absolutely clean and while it uses a sub atomic particle blaster, this evolved from the design of a sandblaster, of which we also learn quite a bit.

The Keck Observatory episode is a great example of how an amazing achievement is used to explore a range of scientific and engineering feats, all with the humour of Richard Hammond guiding us along the way.

We not only get to experience the beauty and majesty of an awesome Observatory but learn how its amazing mirror was made and the technological advancements which were required to make it.

The Taipei 101 skyscraper is another example as we are led into all manner of explorations from the strength of Bamboo to the nature of a bridge, from seat belts to sports cars. We even come to appreciate how the basic design of a turbo in a sports car can be adapted into the lift technology of a super skyscraper.

We travel from the mines of 18th century England learning about the technology to keep them from flooding to the techniques used in making the earliest skyscrapers of Chicago.

When it comes to the Troll A platform we come to appreciate how even a simple join can cause a structure to disintegrate. Accordingly these giant structures are built in one piece requiring amazing feats of concrete pouring. We also learn about the dangers of repetitive sounds (with a neat experiment showing the breaking of a glass using a reoccurring note from an electric guitar) and how resonance must always be considered with sea platforms.

In my mind this series heralds the future of documentary filmmaking, combining a high level of content with carefully constructed experiments, historical content and science. This series teaches us so much without ever really seeming to be educational, the information is

Troll A Platform



imparted as part of trying to understand the construction we are exploring. It exquisitely balances entertainment with informative content but does so with flair and a sense of humour.

Whoever wrote the series should receive an award as it really is such a intelligent way to answer so many different scientific and engineering questions with the context of an one story arc i.e. the construction in question.

Certainly this would have been a very expensive documentary to make, hence there are only four episodes in the series, but since each one is nearly an hour long there is an amazing amount of content. You will go away from each episode wanting to learn more.

All we can hope is that this is a taste of what is to come and there will be another series

I was a Teenage Feminist

Trixie Films

R1 DVD

I was a Teenage Feminist is a personal journey into a powerful, political movement that once sparked passionate response and social revolution, but now routinely evokes discomfort, indifference and even contempt. When we look at the growing influence of the religious right and conservative politics it becomes all too obvious why women's issues need to be once again on the agenda.

Today so many people view feminism as a movement of the past and yet so many significant concerns ranging from equal pay for woman to reproductive rights remain unresolved. While many people try to negate feminism by reducing it to an "abortion" only movement, in reality it is a wide movement with many perspectives and differing values which is held together by a common view of equality for both sexes.



Armed with a video camera, an inquiring mind, and an irreverent sense of humor, filmmaker Therese Shechter criss-crosses both the continent in the hope of re-connecting to the power and



sense of purpose that feminism gave her as a teenager in the 1970s. She has a very down to earth approach, an endearing honesty and a willingness to follow an idea to wherever it goes, she is more than willing to explore her own identity along the way.

As Therese searches for her place in the feminist movement and tries to come to terms with her identity as a modern woman, she asks some fundamental questions: How did feminism lose its voice? Does it even exist today and for that matter, what is feminism?

Therese interviews a view of characters including a stay at home mum who is not only a radical feminist but a political activist, a grrl rock music promoter, the editors of Bust magazine and lots more. There is Vinnie, a liberated young man working to take menstruation out of the closet and promotes tampon cases and a number of older feminist figures who have spent their live fighting for women's rights. She also explores Third Wave feminism and the relationship between feminism and LGBT issues.

This is a superbly made documentary interspersed with fun clips from 1950's moral education films. There is an excellent overview of women's rights throughout history with some nifty animations and a good balance between the personal journey of the filmmakers, interviews and informative content.

With Therese's witty, honest narration, a vibrant cast of thought-provoking characters, a great sense of humour and a very cool soundtrack featuring Ani DiFranco, Gina Young, MoxieStarpark, the classic Free to Be...You and Me and the legendary Helen Reddy, *I was a Teenage Feminist* redefines the F-word for a new generation.

Web: <http://www.trixiefilms.com/teenfem/>

**James May's
Big Ideas
2008
Britain
BBC Productions
TV Series
Demand DVD
R2 DVD**

Reviewer:
Bob Estreich

This 3-part series was made by the BBC for its Open University project. James May, of Top Gear and various other documentary series, presents a number of technological ideas from the past and investigates where they have got to in the present. The three main areas are transport (with an emphasis on personal transport), robotics and energy. In the process he uncovers some ludicrous ideas and some that have gone on to become practical.

Transport is possibly the most fascinating. It covers the range from the 1950s Taylor Aerocar, through rocket belts and personal helicopters, to the giant 250 miles-per-hour Ekranoplan from Russia. Dubbed the "Caspian Sea Monster", the Ekranoplan was like a huge flightless aircraft that lifted (barely) off the ground on a cushion of air using the Ground Effect. Smaller versions are in production today, which are better than the Aerocar. It says a lot for James' bravery that he is prepared to try some of these technologies himself.

James May and the Aerocar



James May and the Rocket Pack

Robotics, as in the human replica robot, is still a long way from success. James notes that one of the biggest problems has been to simply teach a robot to walk.

Surprisingly the people who managed to achieve this feat are at the Disneyland laboratories (the most Mickey Mouse lab he's ever been in). We look at an eye replacement, making robots look more human (really spooky), and even robots that can write music.

In the third episode, Power to the People, James explores alternative energy generation. As well as the now-conventional solar power and its problems, he looks at kites, generation in space, and making petrol from air.

Apart from being somewhat educational, James May's low-key approach and boyish enthusiasms make him an ideal presenter for shows that entertain you but teach you something as well.

We do not review much in Synergy that is suitable for the kids, but they will definitely enjoy this one as much as their mums and dads.

Highly recommended.

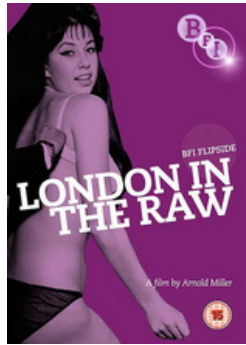
London in the Raw British Film Institute R2 DVD

Mondo Carne (1962) created a new genre in documentary filmmaking, the Mondo film or shockumentary. This unique form of film used the guise of documentary filmmaking to explore subjects which were, at the time, taboo. They began in relatively harmless fashion unusually exploring unusual tribal customs coupled with occasional nudity, for educational purposes, of course ! Much of the action was staged, even though the film makers usually claim "all the footage" was real. As time went on the Mondo genre gave birth to more controversial titles such as the Mondo death documentaries such as *Faces of Death* and *The Killing of America*.

Many of the earliest Mondo films are more quaint than shocking and are fascinating as both a historical snapshot of the given period and the obsessions of the viewing public. Arnold L. Miller's *London in the Raw* is an unusual film which was made in 1964 and while compared to *Mondo Carne* focused on what he perceives to be the shocking truth about London. However, since Miller was a low budget filmmaker, his take on the exploitation film is now not only tame but quite hilarious.

The central theme of *London in the Raw* is the significance of appearances and Miller tries to offer a commentary on the various strands of London society. The problem is that his commentary, even for the time, is overloaded with attempts at humour, bizarre observations and quirky, if not at times, unfathomable references, this makes the documentary seem even more

The not so wild Sixties in *London in the Raw*



silly than it already is.

Miller starts by exploring the upper classes and their need to look good and uses this as an entry point to focus on fitness clubs, beauty treatments, hair transplants for me and new forms of bras. The cinematography is perfect exploitation style filmmaking using strange angles and swinging sixties music to try and show the woman working out in the fitness club from the worst possible perspective.

Of course as soon as he has ridiculed the need to look good we move into the main course, which is entertainment. We are introduced to all manner of clubs from the young and trendy to the down and dirty, the cabaret and strip joints to various ethnic clubs. Since he has a limited budget he obviously padded the documentary out with as much club footage as he could get hold of.

Along the way we also get a social conscience presentation on alcoholism and drug addiction. This is a rather fun, strange and quaint presentation of early Sixties "Mondo" filmmaking, made on a low budget using commentary and music to make up for any real explosive content.

London in the Raw is from the British Film Institute's Flipside series, a collection of "weird and beautiful" British films. It is presented in two versions – a longer 75-minute version and an alternative 47-minute version, which had been cut but also contains footage not seen on the longer version.

In addition to *London in the Raw*, the BFI have also included three short films from the same era – *Peter Davies' Pub* (1962), Staffan Lamm and Peter Davies' *Chelsea Bridge Boys* (1966), and Staffan Lamm, Peter Davies and Don De-Fina's *Strip* (1965).

The presentation of *London in the Raw* is nothing short of astounding, it has been transferred to High-Definition from original elements kept in the BFI archive and looks like it was made yesterday. The colours are bright and clear, there is not a scratch to be seen and the sound is as clear as a bell. This is the way to see any Mondo film !

There is also a superb illustrated 38 page booklet with an essay, reviews, promotional materials for the film and information on the short films also found on the DVD.

Obscene

A Portrait of Barney Rosset and Grove Press Madman Entertainment R4 DVD

Barney Rosset was a maverick. He grew up in a family that encouraged education and freedom of thought and was encouraged to find his own creative outlet. While fascinated by film, he found his niche in publishing.

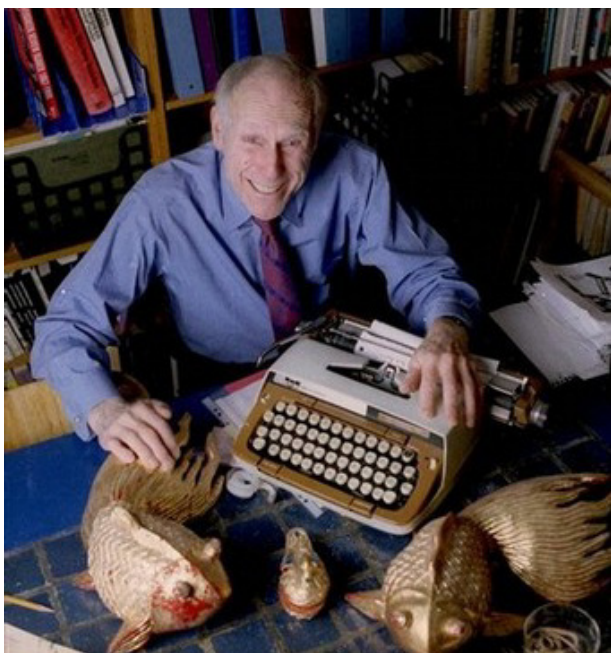
In 1951 he purchased the small art house publisher Grove Press and soon turned it into a powerhouse of creative expression at the edge of radical thinking.

Believing strongly in the value of literature and in the dangers of censorship he stood against the then influential postal censorship system by publishing *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Taking the battle through the courts he won the case and set the stage for a flood of radical and counter culture literature. Each title he published seemed to trigger a legal battle from *The Tropic of Cancer* to William Burrough's *Naked Lunch*. So many of these titles were denounced as pornography and yet went on to become major classics within modern literature.

Barney Rosset also began *The Evergreen review* which published an ever growing sequence of controversial works from the wildly erotic homoerotic poem *Howl* to an excerpt from the diary of Che Guevara.

The Evergreen Review while denounced by the

Barney Rosset



conservative establishment became the voice of the counter culture and a vehicle for an every growing creative literary movement. It was a fascinating balance of radical politics, erotica, poetry, literature and fiction. In many ways it reflected

the diverse interests of both Rosset and Grove Press which could not be easily pigeon holed.

Of course this did not go unnoticed by the authorities with constant FBI harassment and legal cases. Even success in the supreme court was not enough with local authorities passing their own laws against Grove titles. Rosset and Grove suffered death threats, a grenade attack and even the occupation of the premises by enraged feminists and unionists (possibly backed by the FBI).

In the end the constant threat of legal action brought the Grove Press close to bankruptcy with Rosset selling his private land to keep it afloat only to find that a supposed friendly takeover would lead to his sacking. Today Rosset is left living on a very limited income with his books and dreams.

Obscene is as much the story of a man obsessed with literature and freedom of speech as it is the tale of a publishing company. It is also the history of American censorship and the value of freedom of expression. Featuring music by Bob Dylan, The Doors, Warren Zevon, and Patti Smith, *Obscene* is directed by first time filmmakers Neil Ortenberg and Daniel O'Connor and is a fine example of compelling documentary making.

It is also a very significant reminder that the battle for freedom of speech is never over. Today there are still classic works (many published by Grove Press) which are banned in American and Australian schools.

This is not to consider issues relating to film censorship and in Australia the upcoming filtering of all internet traffic.



**Passion and Power –
The Technology of Orgasm
2008**

**United States
Documentary**

**Produced by Wendy Slick and Emiko Omori
Wabi Sabi Productions
First Run Features (USA)
Distributed in Australia by Hopscotch**

Reviewer: Bob Estreich

In Texas you may own up to five vibrators, provided you don't use them. You may, however, own as many guns as you like.

This documentary traces the vibrator through history, around two and a half thousand years. Hippocrates may have been the inventor, using it as a hysteria treatment. Hysteria according to him was caused by the revolt of the uterus against neglect, so it needed some attention. Writers through history worked on the hysteria angle, urging massage of the genital parts to cause an "evacuation of the overabounding fluids".

It was widely believed for many centuries that female orgasm was necessary for conception. By Victorian times this had changed, and women's bodies were tightly contained to prevent "leakages". There were doubts raised that women even had orgasms. If women suffered from hysteria, physicians could bring them to a "hysterical paroxysm" by genital massage. This hysteria could be caused by such novel medical conditions as reading French novels while wearing a tight corset.

Women soon woke up to this and started looking for other methods of satisfaction. The douche apparatus was widely recommended by



such notables as John Harvey Kellogg (yes, of Corn Flakes fame). Water-based methods were slow and labour-intensive, so mechanical vibrators soon appeared. They were not exactly compact – the Chattanooga vibrator stood nearly five feet

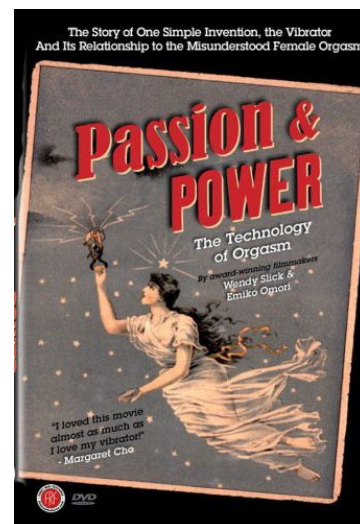
tall. They were still all marketed as medical appliances.

The ready availability of electric power in the home and the reduction in size of electric motors made smaller personal vibrators practical at last. It is noted that the electric vibrator actually preceded the electric iron and vacuum cleaner by nearly ten years, so we know what women would rather be doing. The box for the Andis vibrator has a picture of a lady apparently waiting for the vibrator while her husband uses it to stimulate his scalp. Yeah, right. Good luck to him when he tries to get it back off her.

About this point the vibrator went underground and ads disappeared from the magazines. It wasn't until the 1970s that it resurfaced, this time unashamedly used as a masturbation aid. Women had discovered their own sexuality and kept it under their own control. The "medical" camouflage disappeared and has stayed buried ever since.

Not so the legal side. At least five U.S. states still have legislation on the books restricting the sale, ownership or right to sell vibrators. Despite the best efforts of the Women's movement people can still be charged for owning a device which can stimulate a woman's genitals, and the film gives one such case. Civil liberties are set aside in such states and strangely the Women's Libbers do not seem to have taken up the cause. This latter half of the film is far more disturbing than the lighter note taken earlier. There are still people out there who feel they have a right to impose their morality on others.

In 1952 the American Psychiatric Association took "hysteria" off the list of mental diseases – and put homosexuality on the list instead.

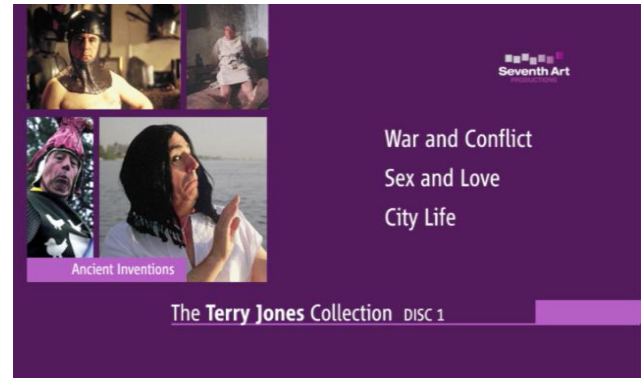
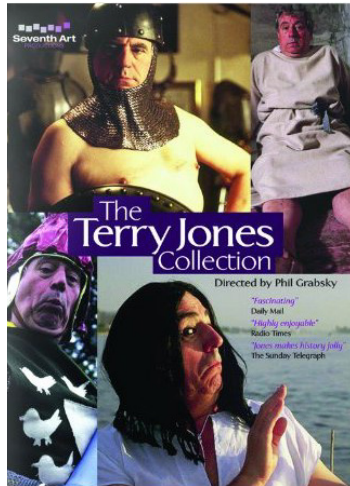


**The Terry Jones
Collection
Seventh Art
Production
Microcinema
2 DVD Box Set
Region Free
DVD**

The Terry Jones collection is a real joy. Jones brings his pythonesque style of humour to history, social customs and technology in a way which is both extremely amusing and informative. While many of the Monty Python team have made documentaries, Jones docs are unique in that they have a rather nice bite. Jones is clearly not enamored with religious conservatism and throws his lot in the workers rather than the establishment so offers a breath of fresh air in a field where so many reserve their opinions.

He is honest, sarcastic, informative and above all, entertaining. There is a lot to like in his presentation; he combines globetrotting to original sites with re-creations and animations of early technology to great effect. He also documents ancient technology from many different cultures, including Aztec, Indian and Chinese, avoiding the western bias still found in many documentaries on these subjects.

The first disc brings together the three programs which made up the 1998 Discovery Channel mini-series *Ancient Inventions*. Jones wants us to truly appreciate that there is "nothing new under the sun" so examines a bewildering range of



so-called modern technological advances showing how their precedents are to be located in ancient ingenuity.

He takes three different areas of life: war, love and the city and examines the various inventions related to the subjects.

Episode one is on *War and Conflict* and examines all manner of ancient weaponry, including the Boomerang (which he proves was not invented in Australia ! Shock horror !), the Molotov cocktail, guns, cannons and a very early flamethrower. He also discusses the by-products of war and how they gave birth to medical advances and new forms of communication.

Episode two is on *Love and Sex* and preempts some of the material covered in the individual program on the subject found on disc two. Jones has a particular beef with moral puritans and sexual suppression and so when dealing with sex is especially amusing. He uncovers all sorts of interesting inventions which were made due to pressure of love (and lust).

The first clock, for example, was developed by a Buddhist monk in China to assist the emperor regular his sexual activities to the sacred astro-

Terry Jones— informative, entertaining and never unwilling to express an opinion.



War and Conflict





City Life

logical timetable which was the foundation of his lineage. Then there are the first herbal forms of birth control, day after pills, abortion potions and even pregnancy tests !

Episode three is on *City Life* and examines the development of the concept of the city from the Middle East to India, Greece and Central America to modern times.

Jones then considers the various technologies which make city life possible ranging from high rise buildings (Roman structures even got to eight stories) to fire engines, fast-food to toilets!

The second disc offers three individual programs, *The Surprising History of Rome*, *The Surprising History of Egypt* and *The Surprising History of Love and Sex*.

The programs on Rome and Egypt offer a very different view than we normally receive of these great civilizations. Rather than focusing on the great edifices and architecture of Rome and Egypt or on the upper classes and royalty, Jones presents the lives of the working class.

Bundling– a safe way to date !



Terry Jones walks like an Egyptian..

We get a fascinating view of what they wore, how they worked, what they eat and what their lives were like. These are illustrated by excellent archaeology and history but also by Jones trying on their clothes and eating their foods, even offering us ancient recipes! This is hands-on archaeology which is engaging, entertaining and extremely informative.

The *Surprising History of Sex and Love* is a real gem. In many ways here Jones shows his hand more than in any of the others. He offers a clear and honest history of views of sexuality, from the sex positive views of ancient pagan cultures to the sexual suppression forged by militarism and Christianity.

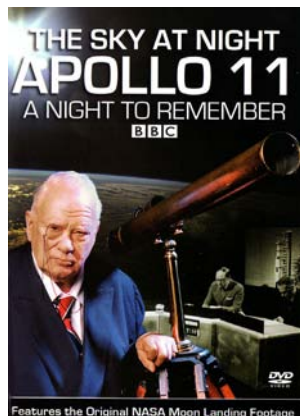
Along the way we are treated to everything from a history of syphilis to the laws regulating prostitution. Some of the most amusing aspects of the program come from the strange trivia Jones presents about cultural attitudes to sex and morality. It is a surprising adult program yet presented in such a way that it is not only informative but amusing. Jones has the ability to discuss the most sensitive of subjects in a subtle way which is both inoffensive and at the same time damn funny.

This is a superb series of documentaries; they balance humour and wit with a highly informative script. The presentation offers lots of onsite explorations, occasional experts, reenactments, animations, models and experiments to keep the subjects explored as interesting as possible. When you combine Jones humour and fast paced presentation you have a highly successful set of documentaries.

**The Sky at Night
Apollo 11 –
A Night to Remember
2009
Documentary
Britain
Acorn Media (BBC)**

**Colour with B&W
historic footage**

**Reviewer:
Bob Estreich**



I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth

**President John F Kennedy
25th March 1961**

Sir Patrick Moore, renowned British astronomer, narrates the launching of the Apollo 11 space-flight that culminated in man first stepping on the moon. The DVD comprises many film clips of the period and includes the live footage of the landing. It also includes information on the little-known Russian mission that may have been designed to reach the moon ahead of the U.S. astronauts, but crashed into the moon instead.

Because the lead-up to the takeoff is minimal the film of the events has an immediacy lacking in many documentaries. Interspersed throughout the documentary are a number of short interludes where we are shown the astronauts' escape tunnel in the event of a malfunction on the launching pad, a tour of the capsule (a poor quality film, likely due to the incredibly cramped conditions in the capsule) and other relevant and interesting sidelines.



Sir Patrick's narration during the early part is also fairly brief, leaving the footage and radio conversations to tell most of the story. Much of the footage shows the effects of time and the lower technology of those days. The footage could have been cleaned up but I am glad it wasn't – the quality of film gives a look of authenticity that remastered footage would not have.

Sir Patrick gives a lot of detail about the moon's surface as the module orbits above it. The critical minutes of the approach and landing are covered in real time and the tension is obvious. Following the landing, and while the astronauts catch up on their sleep, we are treated to a fascinating tour of an astronaut's suit including its waste disposal systems.

The next day's work on the moon, the liftoff and the return to earth are then covered in detail..

The landing was a technological triumph. The documentary shows NASA at the peak of its success. Unlike *The Wonder of It All*, reviewed earlier, this documentary concentrates more on the history and less on the people.

As such it is a valuable record of the event. As a BBC documentary it tends to have the independent examination of history that some U.S documentaries lack, but it still contains a certain feeling of amazement that the whole project actually worked.

The extra include an interview with Gilbert Fiel- den in which he explains the predicted structure of the moon, Patrick Moore examining the structure of the craters of the moon, biographies of the astronauts and a Patrick Moore biography.

The Top Secret Trial of the Third Reich
Director Jochen Bauer
Producer Bengt von Zer Muehlen
Chronos Film Production
First Run Features
R1 DVD

Reviewer: Bob Estreich

English narration; much of the film is in German with clear subtitles

This film is another of First Run's collection of rare and unusual World War 2 German documentaries. The history of the military part of the War has generally been well documented, but First Run is filling in the gaps and revealing a lot of background that has been previously unpublished, become lost or is out of print.

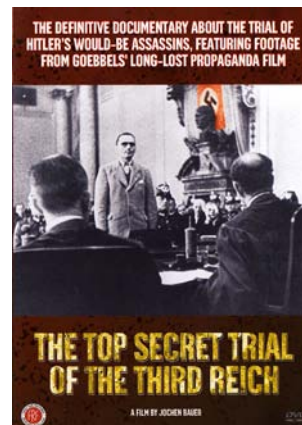
In this film we look at the men who tried, on a number of occasions, to kill Hitler. They were unsuccessful but the punishment meted out to them was brutal and their trials were a farce.

The first attempt was in Munich's Burgerbraukellar. A bomb planted in a pillar of the beer hall went off only a few minutes after Hitler prematurely left the building. The final attempt was by a group of Germans in which a military officer, Claus von Stauffenberg, planted a bomb under a conference table. Hitler was injured but not killed and the retribution was savage.

The show trials of the conspirators in this last case were secretly filmed, and it is this film which makes up the bulk of the footage. The trial judge of the Special Peoples Tribunal, Roland Freisler, obviously believes it is his mission to kill every conspirator who appears before him. His performance in the court is insane – he

postures for the cameras, he screams, bangs on his desk, abuses the suspects and humiliates them.

"You ought to be ashamed – this talk about conditions in Germany. Our Fuehrer IS Germany"



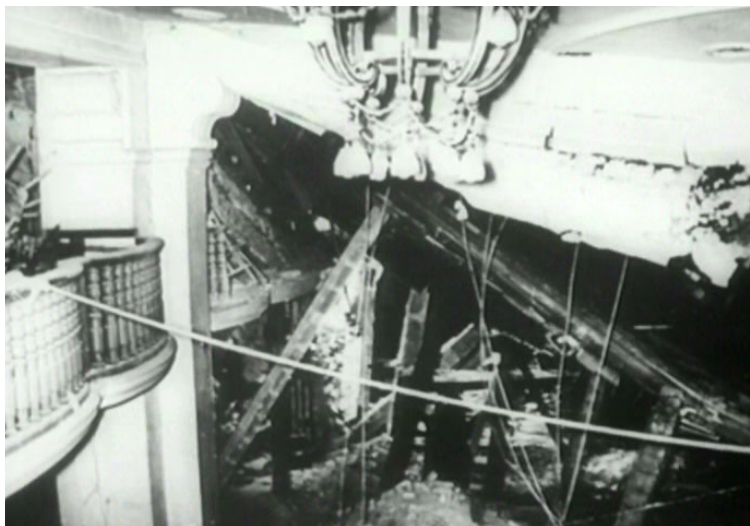
Few escaped the death sentence. The Peoples Tribunal was established by Hitler in 1934 to root out and punish "Enemies of the State". Even inaction, failure to report suspicions of anti-Nazi actions, constituted treason. This excuse was used to order the deaths of nearly 1000 priests who had received confession from conspirators. It was also used against Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, who was given the choice of suicide or a show trial and the death of his family.

Joseph Goebbels arranged to have the film released to the public, but instead of the hoped-for reaction, people actually sympathized with some of the victims. Perhaps it was the first time they realised just how far the Nazis had taken over their country when such a farcical trial was presented to them as justice?

The film was withdrawn and destroyed. This documentary is compiled from the one remaining copy. Quality is poor but it is enough to convey the style of the trial and Freisler's posturing. The victims / suspects face a kangaroo court, not even allowed belts to hold up their trousers. They were once important influential men, now they are just minor performers in a show trial that will end in their slow painful death.

The film is particularly poignant because it shows the last home-grown resistance to Hitler. Without anyone left to face Hitler, the Allies assumed the country was all pro-Nazi. They proceeded to do dreadful damage to Germany that may have been reduced if Hitler could have been assassinated.

Although the conspiracies against Hitler did not play a significant part in the War, this film is important in that it shows that there was some internal resistance, but that resistance was in the end futile.



MAGAZINES



Asian Cult Cinema #62

In Asian Cult Cinema #62 Best selling Crime-Noir author Tom Piccirilli discusses the newest wave of Korean Cinema in "The Dream machine is Activated." He singles out *Hansel and Gretel*, *Death Bell*, *Rough Cut*, *Dream*, *Our Town*, *Open City* and *The Chaser*.



Jerry White offers his controversial review of the Ninja Vixen movies in his article "Box of Rocks," while Stefan S gives an in-depth critique of Tony Jaa's *Ong Bak 2*. Ard Vijn reviews the highly explicit movie *Help Me Eros* and then he (with Peter van der Lugt) interviews the director Lee Kang-Sheng.

Professor Tony Williams takes a look at the Hong Kong Sex Industry as he talks about the two latest movies from Herman Yau, *Whispers and Moans* and *True Women for Sale*.

And then in "Gored to Death," Bradley DeWitt compares *Tokyo Gore Police* with *Chanbara Beauty*. He also answers the big question: In a knockdown, all out battle, who would win - Chanbara Beauty's Aya or Tokyo Gore Police's Ruka.

As usual Asian Cult Cinema also includes capsule reviews, regular reviews and is profusely illustrated. It is always an impressive magazine and one of the only in the field of such superb quality.

Asian Cult Cinema

Web: <http://www.asiancult.com>

Electric Sheep Summer 09 Wallflower Press

'Substitute' is the theme of the summer 09 issue of Electric Sheep, with articles on the fraught relationship between Takeshi Kitano and 'Beat' Takeshi, the various cinematic incarnations of Patricia Highsmith's



Ripley, interchanging identities in Joseph Losey's films, the dangers of false impersonation in neo-noir *Just Another Love Story*, the paradoxes of black and white twins in offbeat lost classic *Suture*, not to mention cross-dressing criminals, androids and body snatchers.

Also in this issue: interview with Marc Caro, reviews of Věra Chytilová's *Daisies* and Richard Lester's *The Bed Sitting Room*, profile of whiz-kid animator David O'Reilly, comic strip review of *Hardware*, and The Phantom Band's favourite films!

Electric Sheep hosts a variety of film clubs, screenings and festival appearances so keep checking our news/events.

Electric Sheep Website

Web: <http://www.electricsheepmagazine.com>

Published by Wallflower Press

Web: <http://www.wallflowerpress.co.uk>

Film International

Volume 7 No. 2 Issue 38

Issue 38 has as guest editor Michael Tapper who coordinates a special examination of crime in both cinema and television.



There is a wide range of in-depth pieces from The British female cop show, Crime and Anxiety in Spooks, Korean crime comedies, the Swedish Wallander phenomenon, Not another bl**dy cop show: *Life on Mars* and other British cop shows.

There are also reviews, news, festivals reports and regular columns.

Web: <http://www.filmint.nu/>

Film International
Volume 7 No. 39
Issue 39

Filmint No 39 is packed with fascinating content. From an examination of cult films and how they are now being remade into politically correct versions to the nature of Blaxploitation cinema with a special focus on the quirky cult vampire film *Blacula*.



There is also an intriguing article on the role of Nostalgia in films about Berlin (and by implication Germany in general) and a challenging piece looking at Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days*.

Filmint continues to offer a wide range of informed reviews, festival news and commentary.

Web: <http://www.filmint.nu/>

Juxtapoz
June 2009
Issue 101

Grotesk, the world-renowned graphic and apparel artist and Creative Director of Zoo York, made two special illustrations for the cover of June 2009's Juxtapoz magazine. #101 also features Chris Johanson, video game and fine artist, Coro, graffiti legend, MQ, fine artist and all around "normal" guy, Skinner, LA-artist, Steve Olson, and photographers Martha Cooper and Henry Chalfant.



Two covers are offered, one for the newsstand and a special subscription only cover.

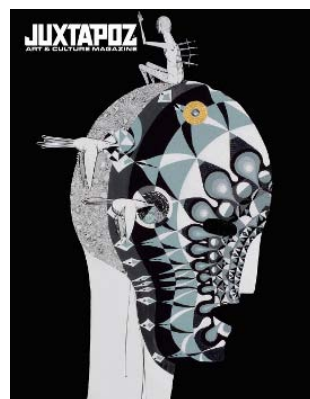
Web: <http://www.juxtapoz.com>

Juxtapoz
July 2009
Issue 102

We are halfway through to 2009, full steam ahead into a decade of the '00s. For July 2009, Juxtapoz Art and Culture Magazine celebrates the release of a special all Brazil issue, focusing on the up-and-coming and internationally renowned talent from one of the leading regions in contemporary art.

The special issue has been edited by esteemed Brazilian curator, William Baglione.

The magazine features covers by street and fine artist, Herbert Baglione. Herbert has exhibited extensively in the United States, as well as a recent show at the massively influential Lazarides Gallery in London, England.



The Brazil issue also features internationally exhibiting artists Tinho, Calma, Sesper, Os Gemoes, Choque Photos, Lost Art, Marcelo Cidade, Carlos Dias, Titi Freak, Bruno 9Li, Eduardo Recife, Pato, and many others.

Web: <http://www.juxtapoz.com>

Korean Cinema
Today
May June 2009
Special Edition
Cannes Film Festival

Korean Cinema Today is an excellent overview of the state of Korean cinema.



The latest issue discusses the development of a second wave in Korean Cinema and looks at the major changes occurring within Korean Cinema.

There is a focus on Kim Ok-vin of *Thirst* fame and on Lee Man-hee, the forgotten master of Korean cinema. There is also a comprehensive analysis of the first quarter of 2009 in regards to Korean film releases.

This issue also includes a special report on Korean buyers and sellers at Cannes.

Korean Cinema Today is also available free in pdf from the Korean Cinema website.

Web: <http://www.koreanfilm.or.kr/index.jsp>

Lunchmeat Issue #3

Many people believe that VHS is dead, but not our friends at Lunchmeat. They celebrate the obscure and the esoteric; films that have not seen the light of day on DVD and still resonate with the charm that was VHS. It is hard to go past the sheer gaudy beauty of the video cover, it is just not the same on a DVD slick.



As Lunchmeat celebrates in its best “satanic” video covers, the horror covers were the most impressive, lurid, garish and designed to grab instant attention.

Sure the images they portrayed had little to do with the film, but that was part of the charm of VHS. The seduction by video cover and shorts (shown at the end of a movie) and the inevitable questioning of what connection did these advertising gems actually have to the movie you are now watching.

Each issue of Lunchmeat includes a selection of rare and wonderful VHS titles, reviewed with loving attention and illustrated with some great covers and images. In Issue #3 there is lots of interesting gems found in the trashcan of video history from the Hellhole (1985) to Mutant Hunt (1987).

There is an excellent selection of reviews plus an interview with filmmaker David A. Prior.

There is also a feature on the Monster films of Worldvision Home Video as well as a look as Republic pictures. We also get a peak at the life of a VHS addict !!

This is a great magazine dedicated to an aspect of genre films not often covered. While so many are obsessed with DVD and even the Blu Ray, they have forgotten the vast library of films left behind. Okay, some of them are probably best left behind, but at least someone is remembering them and that someone is Lunchmeat !

Web: <http://www.myspace.com/lunchmeatzine>

Morpheus Tales Issue 5

Morpheus Tales Magazine of Horror, Fantasy and Science Fiction. Featuring Joe R. Lansdale, Ray Garton, Michael Laimo, Joseph McGee and many more. Dark fiction at its best.



Each story is darkly illustrated by a different artist so you get a superb selection of fiction and dark art. There is also an interview with Andrew Hook of Elastic Press and reviews of books, comics, films and magazines.

Web: <http://www.morpheustales.com>

Murky Depths Issue #8

Murky Depths is a quarterly anthology with a difference.

It features top quality speculative fiction with sprinklings of horror and fantasy that push the boundaries of science fiction



Each story is complimented with its own unique artwork and hence offers a combination of fiction and art within each tale. Alongside the straight prose stories are cutting edge graphic stories.

Articles across the genres and mixed disciplines add authority, humour and maybe a little controversy.

With cover art by cover art by James Johnson, Murky Depths #8 includes an interview with James Johnson and a wide range of speculative fiction, this time focused on comics- both dark and unusual.

One of the major aims is to promote “the literary value of comics” and this issue certainly provides a diversity of interesting graphical content.

Web: <http://www.murkydepths.com>

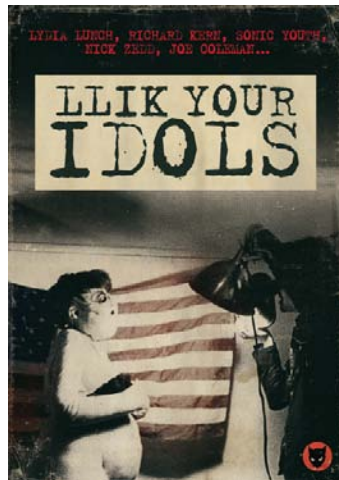
MUSIC

Lik Your Idols MVD Group R1 DVD

While most of the more creative artists and musicians are anti-censorship and have nothing but contempt for conservative regimes, it is ironic that under such regimes they sometimes produce their best work. The pressure to conform, to fulfil a given social role produces such a reaction in many artists that a truly explosive artistic expression results. It is, accordingly, no wonder that under Reagan and Bush Senior a truly radical New York scene developed in the eighties that has not been repeated since.

Under the banner of the Cinema of Transgression a bunch of "insolent kids", including Richard Kern, Lydia Lunch, Joe Coleman and Nick Zedd, briefly become the anti-heroes of a generation. Scornful, cynical, arrogant and flippant, their films and music violently attacked the bland conformity they experienced all around them. Their work ranged from the highly erotic (Richard Kern & Nick Zedd) to the furious and feminist (Lydia Lunch) and truly iconoclastic and artistic (Joe Coleman).

Lydia Lunch and friends



The music produced also had an edge like no other and was made as though as there was no tomorrow, and for many this was close to literally true. It became known as No Wave and featured such bands as *Sonic Youth*, *The Swans*, *Lydia Lunch*, *The Butthole Surfers* and *Foetus*.

Directed and produced by Angelique Bosio this is a low budget documentary produced from obsession and true devotion. With little to no funding Bosio collected interviews with such significant figures as Richard Kern, Nick Zedd, Lydia Lunch, Joe Coleman, Jack Sargeant, Thurston Moore, Richard Hell, Bruce Labruce, Jarboe and others and has created a brutally honest, warts and all journey into the creative underground.

Bosio offers an excellent background to the Cinema of Transgression with its nihilistic and cynical view of life, its obsessions with blood, murder, violence and sex and above all, its incredible honesty about the human condition.

This movie has been shown at festivals and theaters across the globe, including: Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Mu-Meson Archives (Sydney), Chicago Underground Film Festival, Seoul Film Festival, Erotica Film Fest (Los Angeles), Emmetrop Festival (Bourges), Oslo International Film Festival, Coney Island Film Festival, Melbourne Underground Film Festival, The Other Cinema (San Francisco), Lausanne Underground Film & Music Festival, AS 220 (Providence), Seattle Grand Illusion Cinema, and many others...

Repo! The Genetic Musical Sony R4 DVD

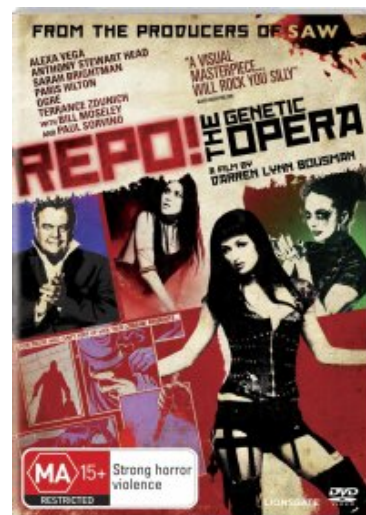
Repo! The Genetic Opera is a 2008 American rock opera-musical film directed by Darren Lynn Bousman. The film is based on a play written and composed by Darren Smith and Terrance Zdunich. It is set in a future dystopia which has the look and feel of a gothic version of *Blade Runner* with splashes of Gotham City. It is a strange mixture of Science Fiction and horror with music which mixes heavy rock, gothic and darkwave and some more operatic flourishes. Many have suggested that *Repo!* is a cross between *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Blade Runner* and it is hard not to agree. It is a weird amalgam to say the least but one which grabs your attention.

When it comes to music, *Repo! The Genetic Opera* certainly packs them in. It actually holds the record for the most musical numbers in a movie, coming in at 64, though these are not all complete songs.

The movie is set in the year 2056 some decades after an epidemic of organ failures devastates the planet. Out of the tragedy, a multinational pharmaceutical company GeneCo, run by Rotti Largo, emerges to provide organ transplants to the dying masses. But these come at a cost, every organ provided comes with a "hire purchase" contract and if you miss the ever increasing payments then you are in real trouble. Rotti Largo soon becomes a major political figure and is able to push through laws allowing organ repossession.

Now his RepoMen hit the street recollecting organs from those who do not make their payments on time and striking fear into everyone else on their books. GeneCo has also devel-

oped a highly successful but addictive painkiller Zydrate which certainly helps their bottom line. It has become so successful that grave robbers are harvesting it from dead bodies and selling a cheaper version on the street.



One such Repo man is Nathan, who hides his profession from his 17-year-old daughter Shilo, representing himself as a doctor and surgeon. Nathan's major concern is to protect Shilo, who has a genetic blood disease inherited from her mother. He believes that the only way he can achieve this is to keep her isolated from the world locked in their house.

Shilo feels suffocated and controlled. Inevitably she escapes and begins a quest to explore the outside world. Soon she begins to learn of the ominous connections between her father, her disease, and Rotti Largo, the head of GeneCo.

Repo! Is a film which is intriguing and memorable but not ultimately unsatisfying. Unlike *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* the music never really moves above average and there are no tracks which stick in your memory. Regardless of the overall interest the film engenders, the music just doesn't seem to be especially exciting. Thinking about it a day later I cannot remember a single track and certainly wouldn't feel inclined to buy the soundtrack. Sure the music is professional but at times quantity seems to have overtaken quality and all the songs seem to merge together.

Strangely this does not totally invalidate the movie itself. As a quirky and unusual Sci Fi Horror film it is very entertaining. But it would be fair to say it doesn't know what it wants to be. Is it a horror film wanting to be a musical or a musical trying to be a horror film? In the end I don't think it knows and this leaves *Repo!* a good, amusing and at entertaining work of cinema, but certainly not a great one!



**Split Sides
Microcinema
All Region NTSC DVD**

We are here to cast the dice.

Merce Cunningham

Split Sides is a work by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company with original music by *Radiohead* and *Sigur Rós*.

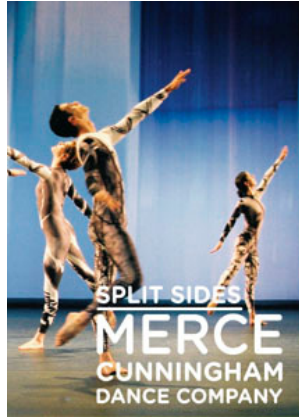
It stands out as a highly innovative and experimental work using dance and music to explore new ways of experiencing the world. It is based on the idea of chance and randomness and each piece is divided into two parts.

Each twenty minute part features one of two options for the different creative elements of the piece: set design, costumes, lighting, music, and choreography.

The order in which each element appears during a given performance is determined by an on-stage dice roll before the performance, captured on full screen for the live audience, certainly a very different approach to a performance.

There are some thirty two possible combinations for any performance. In addition to Merce Cunningham's two choreographic segments, the work features two unique set designs (one by Robert Heishman and one by Catherine Yass), two sets of costumes (by James Hall), and two lighting plots (by James F. Ingalls).

Original scores, composed specifically for this collaboration by the British alternative rock group *Radiohead* and the Icelandic experimen-



Merce Cunningham Dance Company
'Split Sides'
Photo: Tony Dougherty

talist group *Sigur Rós*, offer the two choices of music. When the show premiered the bands actually played live and as could be imagined this created quite a buzz. The only criticism to be heard was that the bands were a little more reserved than normal and that the music produced as more art rock than their usual edgy product. That being said, it is still a very unusual and fascinating production.

This is a quite a unique two-disc DVD set. The viewer has the opportunity to alternate soundtracks being offered four of the possible variations of the work. Filmmaker Charles Atlas masterfully captures the dance with Merce close at his side. Cunningham calls the films *Split Sides 45* and *Split Sides 46*, because they capture the 45th and 46th performances of this epic collaboration.

Contents:

Split Sides 45

Choreography "A" followed by "B"
Music in the basic presentation is *Sigur Rós* followed by *Radiohead*
Alternative sound options are *Radiohead* followed by *Sigur Rós* or silent with the same dance footage.

Split Sides 46

Choreography "B" followed by "A"
Music in the basic presentation is *Radiohead* followed by *Sigur Rós*

Alternative sound options are *Sigur Rós* followed by *Radiohead* or silent with the same dance footage

Web: <http://www.microcinema.com>



Dancers: Cedric Andrieux and Derry Swann
Merce Cunningham Dance Company
'Split Sides'
Photo: Tony Dougherty

Adventures in Paradise
The Waitiki 7
Pass Out records
Web: <http://waitiki7.com>

If, while listening to The Waitiki 7's debut album *Adventures in Paradise*, you find yourself day-dreaming of sipping a cocktail from a tiki mug while lolling about idyllically on a Hawaiian beach as birds sing merrily in the trees not too far away, then you get it. *Adventures in Paradise* is a contemporary reimagining of the classic exotica sound introduced some 50 years ago by Martin Denny, a transplanted mainland pianist who tapped into the tropical zeitgeist, stirred together several disparate elements, and created a whole new sound in the process.

"Exotica," explains Randy Wong, the 28-year-old bassist, music director and co-founder of The Waitiki 7, "*floats in the zone between soundscapes and an early world music hybrid. Denny took popular WWII-era Hawaiian Island songs and a Latin feel and then added birdcalls.*"

He took large orchestrations intended for full symphonic orchestra and pared them down to make them feasible in the combo context. But exotica just sort of stopped developing in the '60s."

Which is where The Waitiki 7 comes in. Although they take inspiration from Martin Denny and other exotica pioneers such as Les Baxter and Juan Garcia Esquivel, The Waitiki 7 is a band for today, adding various musical genres and pop culture images.

Adventures in Paradise was recorded in a whirlwind two-day session at Q-Division Studios in Somerville, Mass., with Wong and Mayer serving as executive producers and Brother Cleve, a former member of the '90s neo-lounge music group Combustible Edison, serving as production consultant and helping out with the mixing and mastering.

Both original compositions and classic exotica were given The Waitiki 7 treatment. "*Everything is through-composed,*" says Wong. "*Then of course the solos are all improvised.*"

Any preconceived notions that exotica might encompass a narrow



range of musical ideas are quickly dispelled upon the first listen to *Adventures in Paradise*. From the opening track, a cover of Les Baxter's "Coronation," to the closing title track, the theme from a TV program that ran in the late '50s and early '60s, the diversity and virtuosity of The Waitiki 7 are constantly on display. Highlights include "L'ours Chinois," a stunning violin concerto composed by Wong and featuring Liu; a cover of Denny's "Manila" using such exotic percussion instruments as the güiro (a gourd played with an egg whisk scraper) and the quijada (literally the jaw of a donkey); and "Octopus Menagerie," which Wong calls "the weirdest tune on the album, with spoken word and avant-garde trombone."

Other tracks run the gamut from "Totem Pole," originally found on jazz trumpeter Lee Morgan's classic album *The Sidewinder*; to a Zaccai Curtis original called "Craving"; Denny's "Left Arm of Buddha," which Brother Cleve describes as "tiki noir"; Mayer's "Ouanalao," based on the Angolan semba and Caribbean zouk rhythm; and "Mood Indigo," the famous Duke Ellington song, arranged for the band by trombonist Mike Dease.

Rounding out the album are the Wong-penned ballad "Her Majesty's Pearl," which he calls "pretty much a dialogue between piano and vibraphone," embellished with bird and animal calls, of course; "Ned's Redemption," a short but madcap improvised xylophone rag spotlighting Benoit; and "Sacha-Cha," which, as its name implies, is a cha-cha, written by Wong.

TOYS & COLLECTABLES



Gwins

October Toys

Web: <http://www.octobertoys.com>

The *Gwins* are very cool 2.5" vinyl penguins designed by a variety of artists, each reflecting their own style, interests and obsessions. They are very creative little figures which come in three different series, each in limited production. Series one had 400 of each design, series two 400 and series three 200.

There is also a very limited run of 150 of Glow in the Dark Gwins plus a very special Gwin named Bandwa, which was the super special edition surprise Gwin for San Diego Comic Con 2008. Only a very few are available of the Bandwa release.

The Gwin is a curious creature based on Tux, created by Larry Ewing & The GIMP. Gwins spend most of their time eating, sleeping, and hoarding treasure. They often form "armies" to protect their amassed riches. Now is your chance to build your own Gwin Army to guard your prized possessions!

The Gwins are quite unique and very collectible. Series 2 includes 7 Gwins and has a limited run of 400 per piece. Some of the pieces which caught my attention in this series include:

Jebus

Designer: Christie

Christie is a self proclaimed outside artist with a passion for Halloween, Disneyland, and Elvis. She is the creative force behind some of the most macabre dolls you've ever seen.



These creepy creations coupled with the variety of unique paintings she produces set Christie apart as an amazing and versatile artist. Jebus is an amazing little figure who looks rather religious in nature with the Sacred Heart on his chest and stigmata on his hands ! Jebus sits approx. 2.5" high.

Bunny!

Designer: C. Spliedt

"Although I've been pretty damn creative since I was old enough to hold a crayon, over the past five-to-six years I started to take painting, graphic design, and artwork in general, a bit more seriously." Spliedt's original designs and fantastic characters are a little dark, a little twisted, and always amazing.



The Bunny Gwin is superbly dark in greys and blacks with an orange and yellow eye and rather large white teeth.



Series 3 includes five figures featuring designs by Squidboy, Jim Koch, Lou Pimentel, Hideous-Boi, and Bill Rawley. They sit approximately 2.5" high. Series 3 is limited to 200 pieces of each design. Some of the pieces which caught my attention in this series include:

Night of the Living Gwin

Designer: Squidboy

Shan Michael Evans, also known as Squidboy, is an avid artist and lover of horror movies. Having customized a variety of toys over the years, Squidboy has developed a clean, partly whimsical, partly dark style all his own to share the message that the dead will rise again.



Night of the Living Gwin sits approx. 2.5" high and is limited to 200 pieces. This is a superbly evocative piece in Zombie green with the living dead in silhouette on its stomach and with black feet.

Snack Time

Designer:

Lou Pimentel

Lou Pimentel was born in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. When he was four his family moved to Florida for a few years before settling in to Brooklyn when he was nine.



Lou began drawing at the young age of four; with his father's help he started by drawing simple little fish. When he was five he would trace comic books and as a teen his art was greatly influenced by the streets of the city. He is a self taught artist.

The influence of his urban upbringing and fondness of pop-art can be seen in his work. He finds inspiration from comic books, cartoons and graffiti. He is a well rounded artist that works with paints, sewing, beading, sculpting, and other fun crafts. Currently Lou is working as an up and coming artist in Brooklyn and plans on spreading happiness and joy across the world through his art.

Snack Time is a more whimsical Gwin which is colourfully presented and rather endearing.

Snack Time sits approx. 2.5" high and is limited to 200 pieces.



Another very impressive item from October Toys is Panzy the Pirate. Panzy is the second goth doll from the expanding Pocket Full of Posiez universe!

October Toys works closely with the Posiez artist/creator Queenie to ensure that each little Goth girl lives up to the Posiez image and the high standards required by their creator.

Panzy is a lovely looking goth creation with blood red hair, a striped black and white dresses and black boots.

She wears a pirate cap, eye patch and key around her neck. She comes with a keg like handbag.

Panzy is nearly sold out so you better get in quick. She comes in a presentation box.

See **Pocket Full of Poesiez** for more information on Panzy the Pirate and Lyllionia.

Web: <http://www.PocketFullofPosiez.com>

October Toys

Web: <http://www.octobertoys.com>

Los Huevos

Fuzzy Balls Apparel is a project based upon the prints and small sculptures of Roy Wasson Valle. All the available products are based exclusively on his work and are very handmade. The T-Shirts are non sweat shop American products, printed locally.

Los Huevos are very unique items; they are a cross between the Mexican Day of the Dead and Easter. They are very cool resin figures which are exact replicas of the original sculptures, so are quite different from traditional "urban vinyl" toys.

They are limited to 1000 pieces per design and will never be recast, since they are "egg shaped" they come with small stands.

Raul

The skeletal bear in a bear costume. In a previous life his soul was more like a rock. Now it is more like a feather, a heavy feather.

He has a whole story to tell, but for now he's keeping his lip...teeth shut...together, and not saying anything. "See you in the funny papers."

He is orange in colour with a rough texture. He has a gray face with some serious teeth. What a dark little blighter!

Querida

She's the one who is loved. "Un beso para mis Amores." She can be very beautiful and she



likes to have fun, but that doesn't always mean with you or me. Sad, but true. She is black in colour, smooth in texture with rouge on her cheeks and puckered up ready to kiss.

Gato

Mostly when one looks at a cat, you can tell there's not much going on behind their eyes. Not his cat. He knows what's going on.

He also doesn't think he's people. Don't assume things about others. Meow !



Blue in colour with a cute yellow face, but a very nonchalant look on his face!

Bastardo

Being a jerk is his way. Someday he will find himself in trouble. It's true! He's headed down the wrong path. Also, his teeth go all the way around his head. What do you think that means?

He is a naughty boy, gray in colour, teeth all the way around and with an eye that sees everything !



The Raul Ghost

In White, Gray or Black. The Raul Ghost plush is soft and comforting, yet a bit scary at the same time.

It is made from new materials and filled with lotsa of love !

Approximately 5"x13.5" , it is extremely limited and handmade.



Fuzzy Balls Apparel

Web: <http://www.fuzzyballsapparel.com>

Medusa's Gaze

Yamato USA

Web: <http://www.yamatotoysusa.com/>

Dare you gaze upon the face of Medusa?

Medusa's Gaze is an astounding work of fantasy art by Luis Royo as interpreted by master sculptor Shungo Yazawa. It is the second piece in Yamato USA's Fantasy Figure Gallery and offers exquisite detail and attention getting presentation. It comes on its own stand and is some 11.80" tall - quite a conversation piece. The combination of a leading European erotic fantasy artist with a superb Asian sculptor has created a work of stunning beauty.

Luis Royo was born in 1954 in Olalla, Spain. He studied painting, interior design and decoration and in 1972 began to show his work in various exhibitions, at this early stage his style had a strong social focus. In 1978 on discovering adult comics in the work of such artists as Enki Bilal and Moebius he began to draw comic strips for various magazines and exhibited in the Angoulême Comic Fair in 1980. In 1981 and 1982, his work was published in works such as "Comix International", the "Rambla", "El Vibora" and "Heavy Metal". In 1983 he began to create illustrations which featured dark, strong yet highly eroticized images of women, these were featured by a diverse range of publishers such as "Tor Books", "Berkley", "Avon", "Warner" and others. These brought him major success and worldwide attention.

In 1992 his first book was published, Women, followed by Malefic (1994), Secrets (1996), III Millenium (1998), Dreams (1999), Prohibited Book (1999), Evolution (2001), Prohibition Book 2 (2001), Conceptions I (2002), Visions (2003), Prohibited Book 3 (2003), Conceptions II (2003), Prohibited Sketchbook (2004), Fantastic Art (2004), The Labyrinth Tarot (2004), and Conceptions III (2005).



Luis Royo

To these titles we must add the publication various series of collector cards, portfolios, posters, and Tarot cards - The Black Tarot and The Labyrinth Tarot. The last is an esoteric se-



© Luis Royo / Licensed by Norma Editorial

quence of cards based on the ancient tradition combined with a book. All the illustrations together with explanatory texts were written by Roto himself including his own personal take on the occult meaning of each card. Tarot card decks have proved fascinating to fantasy artists H.R. Giger having produced sets similar decks.

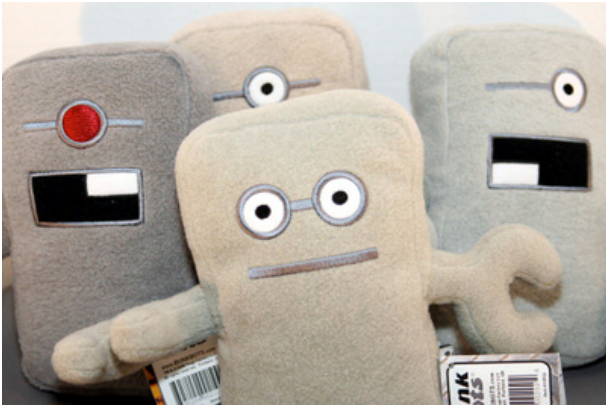
Royo was also featured in a wide range of major illustration and comic magazines including the influential Heavy Metal. His work has also crossed mediums and is now featured on everything from calendars to postcards.

Yamato USA has expanded the presentation of his work into sculpture with the Medusa's Gaze. The first thing you notice about this work is its groundbreaking quality. It has been made in resin quality PVC and hence offers incredible detail at a reasonable price. The detailed paintwork is inspired and she stands firmly on the base looking both beautiful and proud.

The sword slots carefully into her hand giving the figure an even more "realistic" pose. There are so many details which grab your attention from her hair to the various weapons she is carrying. This is a truly masterful collectible.

Medusa's Gaze is packaged in a collector's style window box.

Strange & Wonderful Plushies



Bunk Bots

Web: <http://www.bunkbots.com/>

Jason Hilbourne is the designer of Bunk Bots. He is a product design engineer who lives in Portland, Oregon. His two boys used to bring pointy plastic robot toys into their bunk beds at night. One day, Hilbourne asked his wife Greta, "How can they sleep with those sharp claws poking them in the ribs?"

Then he went to the lab and got to work. After five-year-old Sam used the first soft Bunk Bot prototype (and a fierce little robot voice) to round up some stuffed animals in the corner of his room, Hilbourne knew that he was on to something.

These robots got together one day after lunch and decided to escape from the huge factory. Okay? Now they just want to hang out in your room and play with your stuff. Robots with red eyes are up to no good, and they sort of want to

take over the world. But before they do, they want to hang out in your room and play with your stuff.

The Bunk Bots are superbly made soft fleece plush robots, 20cm or 8 inches in height and each with their own personality and style. They have plush mechanical arms and uniquely designed eyes and mouths.

There are a total of 10 different characters, using 5 different designs.

Each design is available as a good robot as well as a bad robot. The difference between the two is that good robots are light gray and have white eyes with black dots, while the bad robots are darker gray and have solid red eyes.

A special message from Huge Factory to Dads:

Deal with it. Your kid loves stuffed animals. But you don't have to buy your kid a fluffy pink unicorn or a little kitty cat doll. Huge Factory is giving you an option that will make everybody happy. Robots are awesome. Buy your kid a Bunk Bot.

A special message from Huge Factory to Geeks (or... our peers):

Know your enemy. If the next generation knows more about robots... if we can influence more children to become gearheads... then, and only then, will humans have a fighting chance against the robot apocalypse. Huge Factory is preparing for the future, and you can too.

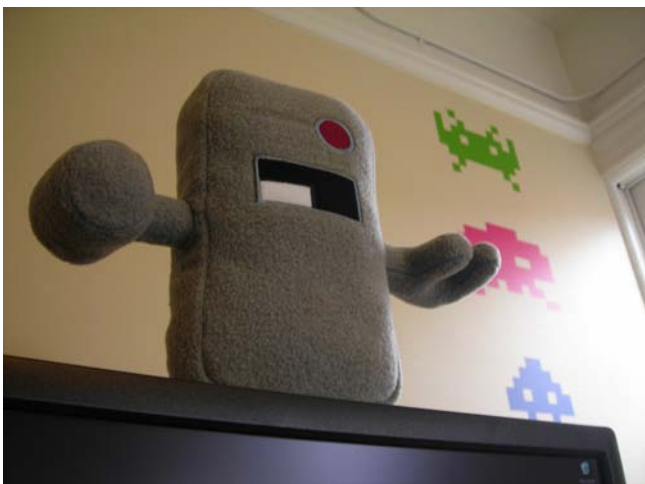
Do your part to ensure the survival of the human race. *Buy a Bunk Bot.*

Mr.Toast and Friends

Web: <http://theimaginaryworld.com/mrtdol.html>

If you were the sort of kid who liked to play with your food, here is a new and trendy way to do so.

Mr.Toast and friends are plush toys modelled on breakfast foods.





They are quirky, a little weird and very fun.

There is Mr.Toast, who is 7" tall (about the size of an actual piece of toast.).

His friends include Joe the Egg (6" tall), Clem Lemon (9" tall) and Shaky Bacon (10" tall).

Each one has its own personality and unusual style. I especially like Mr.Toast and Shaky Bacon.

Shaky Bacon looks like he is very nervous as he knows he is about to get fried and eaten !!!

However, if you want some more meat, then you really can't go past Haminal ?

Canning average pigs is certainly a messy and time consuming task, since they are far too big to fit in a can.

At last, this problem is no more. By condensing the cuteness of several ham-related animals, we have successfully created a canned-ham animal or...Haminal.



Haminal is a small, furry, pink boneless animal, who is perfectly designed to fit in a can !

He is 4.5" long by 3.5" tall with a cute as a button little nose !



According to the designer, Crystal Chesney-Thompson, Haminal is a combination of pig, hamster and guinea pig !

Haminal comes in a spam-like stackable plastic can. All four sides of the packaging are nicely presented with illustrations and entertaining facts.

There is nutritional information, serving instructions and even a recipe ! The can is just as much fun as the plush, it really adds to the presentation.

If you purchase the Haminal through the website you even get a ring of pineapple to go with it.

There also is a mini version of the Haminal that is about 3" long by 2" tall. But he doesn't come in a can !

If you want to know more about Haminal. There is also a full colour book written in rhyme which tells us all about how people enjoy eating their Haminals !



Haminal is really quite a unique plush toy, there is nothing quite like it. It is fun, beautifully made, rather outlandish and very collectible.

Web: <http://www.haminal.com/>



Organ Donors

Organ Donors are the most bizarre, odd and weird collectibles we have seen in quite a while. At the same time they are fun and educational. They remind all of us of the importance of organ donations and how they can really save lives. Indeed David Fook designed the Organ Donors after hearing the story of a family member who received a double lung transplant from an Iron Man competitor who was killed in an accident. It is amazing how a terrible and tragic loss can lead to the gift of another life. The recovery went well and today this organ recipient lives an active and satisfying life.



The Organ Donors were first unveiled at New York Comic Con in February of this year. They were very well received by the public and press and since then they have been reviewed for BBC (Brasil), Daily Telegraph (UK), Yahoo! Buzz, Trendhunter Magazine, Plastic and Plush, Vinyl Pulse, Toyocyte, Rue Morgue, Clutter Magazine, and now Synergy.



Each one is superbly detailed in a cute little hospital gown with butt cheeks waving in the wind. Many of the gowns include logos and designs, while others are plain in colour. There are some nine different organs in the range (Lungs, Stem Cells, Brains, Eyeball/Cornea, Blood Cells, Kidneys, Livers, Plasma and Hearts), which are presented in 24 design combinations.

They are 3.25 inch in height with five points of articulation. It is really amazing just how detailed these little characters are, and they really are "characters". Each one seems to have a different personality. There is a brain with a brown hospital coat with an image of two test tubes on the front and a large yellow eye with a green body and a white coat with a UFO on it. (The eye reminds me ever so much of these old Sci Fi monster flicks!).

There is a liver with a skin coloured body and a blood splattered white coat with an image of a large knife. (Which reminds me of the infamous Monty Python Meaning of Life "Liver Donor" skit) and there is the lungs with a black and brown coat with a no smoking symbol on it. All of the twenty four Organ Donors are eye catching and even visually appealing in their own weird and wonderful way. Wherever you place them they will certainly grab attention. How about placing some organ donation forms in front of them in your foyer or lounge room !

They are sold in "blind boxes" so it is a surprise what you get, some of the donors are rare so it will be fun to see how many you can find !

Fook-U

Web: <http://www.fook-u.com>



Adam Ape

Adam Ape is really an astounding figure, standing 7 inches tall, he certainly makes an impression. He was created by Winson Ma and produced by Play Imaginative. Adam is a total contradiction, an Ape wearing an explorer suit complete with an airbrush and a removable mini-ape accessory.

Tenacious Toys is a well established web based retail toys and collectible store. They offer an excellent range of product, offer free shipping in the US for orders over \$100 US and have a mailing list providing information on specials, new toys, pre-orders, sales and promotions. When trying to find a retail store online to satisfy your needs you need to balance price, stock levels, service and reliability and Tenacious comes out on top in all of these departments. They have an extensive range which can be searched via type or manufacturer, offering solid coverage of plush, vinyl and other styles and have good prices. Their service is exemplary and they are always communicative and friendly. Their newsletter and blog will keep you right up to date on new toys and products.

We had a close look at four of their products in quite some detail. Each was available at a good price, quickly dispatched and exceptionally well packaged. They all arrived in perfect condition.

You can even remove Adam's head and find his skeleton skull within, His removable head and inner skull makes him quite unique.

The shape and texture of Adam is very lifelike and there are all sorts of extras which make him special, ranging from the Adam Ape symbol on his neck to his cool teeth. The airbrush and power cord give Adam a three dimensional look.

Adam is King of the Ape Empire and is strong and loyal but don't get in his way if he is mad !

Since he is a very limited run of only five hundred, he comes with a very nicely produced art print and certificate of authenticity which is personally signed. There is also a 450 run of a red brown edition. He is presented in an unusual trapezoidal box.

Everything about Adam Ape screams collectible ! The meticulous, one could even say obsessive, eye for detail means this figure stands out as a truly unique item, from the figure itself to the shape of the box and the art print and certificate ! Truly a figure to treasure.

Artist Winson Ma works with Brothersfree, a trio of figure artists also including William Tsang and Kenny Wong, all from Hong Kong. Their toy line is centered around a group of construction workers known as Brothers Worker. There is also a set of figures made up to look like clowns known as Brothers Joker. What is unusual about this figures is the size (12") , incredible detail and all the tools, clothes and belts which are created with each.

Winson Ma decided he also wanted to create solo works so developed Winson Classic Creation which offers two 1:6 scale series Apexplorers and Fire Spectre. He has ventured into designer vinyl with Adam Ape, the first of several planned vinyl figures from Play Imaginative.



Kid666

Designed by Swiss designer and artist, Nada One, Kid666 is a new direction for Toy2R designer figures. Setting new heights in artistic design, this huge figure is startling and visually arresting. It is 10" in height and grabs your attention. He has articulation at the horns, hands and sneakers. The fact that the horns and hands can be moved really gives you the ability to give Kid666 your own unique presentation. His eyes are red and dangerous, his sneakers are rather cute. He has an amazing tail, markings on his head and an arm-band marked 666. He has been produced in a limited run of 500.



Nada One is a Swiss Graffiti Artist who has left his mark on walls throughout the world since 1989. His art is immediately recognizable and his unique painting technique enables him to realize a lot of styles and characters in the most unusual locations. In 2006 he began to work with other Swiss artists and designers to create designer toys. Their first product is Kid666 released in conjunction with Toy2r.

Daisy

The Scavengers series by Kathie Olivier are a highly successful range of cute but dark if not at times harrowing little vinyl toys based on her original "Misery Children" artwork. Her paintings and sculptures reinterpret the tradition of early American naive portraits of children into a dark post-apocalyptic world in which kids are left to fend for themselves among a menagerie of mutated wild animals.



The second series features eight figures includ-

ing Daisy. The figures are all 3" in size and are some of the most detailed mini figures I have seen. She is a very pretty figure with a highly expressive face and lots of design elements.

She comes packaged in an elegant flip-top magnetic latch box complete with a slip cover. They are produced by MindStyle.

For more on Kathie Olivier visit:
<http://www.miserychildren.com>

Dunny Series 5 : Dirty Donny by Dirty Donny

Dunny Series 5 moves to an amazing level of creativity bringing together nineteen of the most significant designers in the field of vinyl toys.



These little masterpieces include designs by Amanda Visell, Aya Kakeda, Clutter, Devilrobots, Dirty Donny, Frank Kozik, Huck Gee, JMGS//Jellymoon, Jesse LeDoux, JK5, Junko Mizuno, Kathie Olivas, MAD, Mad Barbarians, MISHKA, Reach, Sneaky Raccoon, Steven Harrington, TOOFLY. Each is sold with a collectible sticker.

Dirty Donny is a real strange one, he has three wide open bloodshot eyes in a state of constant nervous activity, a nice yellow body and a painted metal outfit and ears ! He looks a bit like a robot or cyborg rabbit and is made using rotocast soft vinyl. He stands three inches tall and has a rarity is 1/25.

The Dunny series 5 is sold as open blind boxes, so you know what you are getting or as blind boxes where you take your chance but also have the opportunity to get rare figures. If you take the risk you may get one of the 1 in 100 custom-configured Koziks; a testosterone-jacked pearlescent; the mysteriously numbered and flocked Kathie Olivias; or a top secret chase. If luck is on your side, find 1 of 600 Golden Tickets redeemable for an elusive, 3-inch Huck Gee Dunny which is not for sale as an open box anywhere. They are produced by Kidrobot.

Web: <http://www.tenacioustoys.com/>
Blog: <http://tenacious-toys.blogspot.com/>



ANATOMICAL
GIFTS

ORGAN DONORS

A new vinyl series by David Foon.

Signings are happening.
Dates and locations will be posted on FOOX-U.com
David Foon will personally be signing all organs.



Bringing humanity together one organ at a time.

Next Issue: Halloween Horror

*It took God six days to create
the Heavens and the Earth...*

*and Monty Python
ninety minutes to screw it up.*

MONTY PYTHON'S THE MEANING OF LIFE



"MONTY PYTHON'S THE MEANING OF LIFE" Written by and Starring GRAHAM CHAPMAN
JOHN CLEESE · TERRY GILLIAM · ERIC IDLE · TERRY JONES · MICHAEL PALIN

Produced by JOHN GOLDSTONE Animation & Special Sequences by TERRY GILLIAM

Directed by TERRY JONES A UNIVERSAL RELEASE

